

Tweeting for Change: How Twitter Users Practice Hashtag Activism Through #BlackLivesMatter
and #MeToo

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1. Introduction

In today's society, the internet is an essential part of our everyday lives. In some ways, cyberspace has become a replica of the real world and the public sphere: we use the internet to shop for clothes or books, to read and discuss the news, to make new friends, and even to find love. The role of social media has become especially important in the modern, globally interconnected world. Today, news from one corner of the world can spread through Facebook and Twitter around the globe in a matter of hours. Social media also allows the public to react to news instantly and in real time: "the advent of the Internet introduced different technological capabilities for the production and consumption of news in general", Andreas Jungherr (2014, p. 240) writes. Not only can people express their thoughts on current events on social media, they can also find like-minded friends who share their views, or even reach out to world leaders directly: popular social media platforms such as the aforementioned Twitter and Facebook are used by some of the most powerful politicians in the world to spread their message and connect with their supporters. It is safe to say that social media has changed our political landscape in ways that people just a hundred – or even fifty – years ago could have never predicted.

This study focuses on one social media giant, Twitter, and its users' participation in political movements through hashtags. One of the most groundbreaking aspects of social media is indeed its interactivity. Compared to traditional media such as newspapers and television, which simply provide the news to their audiences in a one-way exchange, social media allows its users to participate in the debate on current events through comments, hashtags, or even videos. According to Parmelee & Bichard (2012), studies on Twitter users' motives suggest that they use the website as a venue for voicing their political opinions and for the exchange of political opinions in addition to simply receiving political news and contacting politicians. In recent years, the hashtag function on Twitter has also been used to form mass movements online, such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. This paper examines these two movements by collecting tweets found on Twitter under these particular hashtags; the data will then be analyzed and categorized based on the different purposes for which the hashtags are employed. The aim of researching the phenomenon of online activism is to better understand how it functions, as well as how Twitter users participate in the creation and progression of these protest movements through their own comments. This study starts off from the assumption that people use these hashtags for a diverse variety of purposes, ranging

from encouraging real-life political actions and sharing their own stories of racism or sexism to making jokes or criticizing the movements.

Another aspect of online activism this paper aims to discuss is how these online movements fit into the long traditions of mass movements and political protests in American history. The study seeks to examine whether the internet is the main battleground for political activists in the 21st century, or simply a helpful tool to spread political messages and encourage real-life actions. Since both hashtags included in this study originated in the United States, it seems sensible to examine them from the point of view of American history and culture. Especially under Donald Trump's presidency, issues of racism and sexism have again been brought to the forefront of political discussion, and the fact that many see their human rights as being threatened by the current administration has led to new waves of activism in the country.

This paper briefly examines two significant campaigns in the history of political protesting in the United States, the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s, and second-wave feminism of the 60s and 70s. This is done in order to place the current online movements explored in this study, #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo, in their historical contexts. It is highly important to see the overlap between these historical movements for social and political change: while many of their contributions went unsung, African-American women were active in the struggle to advance women's rights in the United States – while also combating the racism within the inherently white suffrage movement itself; black women were also on the forefront of the civil rights movement, risking their lives for the cause; on college campuses, the civil rights movement inspired African-American students – and their allies – to protest for better treatment of black people in academic environments as well (Matthews, 2000). The movements fed and inspired each other, but also often differed from each other in terms of their ideologies, goals, and purposes.

In this study, Twitter discourse is examined from the point of view of digital discourse, as defined in the studies in Helasvuo, Johansson, and Tanskanen (2014). These studies provide the core of the theoretical framework for this paper. Following the theoretical background, the methodologies used for analytical purposes in this study, critical discourse analysis and digital discourse analysis, are also introduced. Since this study focuses on the online landscape in particular, highlighting digital discourse analysis as one of the key tools in conducting this paper seems apt. The section after the methodologies focuses on the main topic of this study, hashtag activism, and its pros and cons. Following that, the two hashtag movements at the center of this study, #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo, are introduced to the reader alongside historical examples of earlier activism which has

paved the way for these new campaigns for social justice. Finally, the data for this study is examined and analyzed in detail, followed by a discussion of the findings and conclusions made from the data. The appendix at the end of this paper presents all the tweets collected for this study in their respective categories.

2. Theory and methodology

This section examines some of the previous research conducted on the topic of digital discourse and interaction, as well as introduces the methodological framework applied in this study. Much of the text is adapted from my Bachelor's Thesis (Lampinen, 2016), which focused on sexist slurs and their use in the comment sections of the video-sharing website YouTube. The theoretical background stems mostly from a book edited by Helasvuo, Johansson, and Tanskanen (2014) which offers diverse perspectives on digital interaction and its different forms, including text messages, blogs, and online chat rooms, to name but a few. The methodology relevant to this study, critical discourse analysis, is introduced in section 2.2. The purpose of the next section on theoretical background presented below is to introduce the aspects of digital interaction which were critical to consider while conducting this study and which are important for the reader to acknowledge as well, whereas the methodology section discusses the method that was used when analyzing the data for this study.

2.1. Theoretical background

The chapters in Helasvuo, Johansson, and Tanskanen (2014) examine the topic of digital interaction from many different points of view. As online discourse is still a relatively new phenomenon, it is a fresh but also quite unknown field of study (Helasvuo et al., 2014). However, interest in the topic is growing rapidly, and even since the publishing of this book, many new studies on online discourse and different social media platforms have been conducted. One quite unique challenge that researchers face when tackling the subject of digital discourse is the extremely quick pace with which the online landscape changes; new platforms for online communication are created constantly, and old ones often fade away and lose their users' interest surprisingly quickly. Social media and its different communication and interaction platforms are part of web 2.0, which refers to the second developmental phase of internet technology (Helasvuo et al., 2014). The following paragraphs introduce other ways of categorizing the many different platforms the concept 'social media' entails.

Helasvuo et al. (2014) refer to Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) categorization of social media platforms into six distinct groups: websites that are focused on forming a collaborative space;

websites that are focused on sharing and broadcasting content; interactive websites such as Facebook; gaming communities; and blogs. As can be seen from these short descriptions of each group, many websites can also be considered to belong to two or more of these groups. For example, the social media platform the study presented in this paper focuses on is Twitter, which could be considered to be both a content-sharing website as well as an interactive platform; you can include videos or links to longer articles in your tweets, and also interact with other users. Another example of this could be Facebook, which is categorized here as an interactive website, but also offers the possibility of sharing content, such as pictures and videos.

The categorization of different social media platforms can also be approached from the point of view of *genres*. In the context of digital interaction, the term genre can be defined as a communicative type of action, or a certain type of communicative action which is confined in a certain situation, time, and place (Helasvuo et al., 2014). A certain genre has a certain purpose it seeks to fulfill, and a certain kind of audience it aims to reach (Helasvuo et al., 2014): a writer of a personal blog, for example, often seeks to share their experiences and opinions with other people, and attempts to reach a like-minded audience with which they can discuss their writings. In online spaces, genres are often limited by the type of environments they exist in (Helasvuo et al., 2014); some websites may offer many different ways of communicating and responding to other people – for example on Twitter one can favorite, retweet, or reply to another person’s tweet – whereas some websites offer only very simplified means for communication.

The most common term used in reference to the topic of online language and interaction is *computer-mediated communication*, which was most famously utilized by Susan Herring in 1996; however, today this term might be considered by some as being slightly old-fashioned (Helasvuo et al., 2014). The term digital discourse has gained support in recent years, but its usage begs for a clearer definition of the word digital (Helasvuo et al., 2014). The term is difficult in its broadness: text messaging, playing video games, reading recipes online, or blogging could all be called digital activities in some aspect (Helasvuo et al., 2014). The terms technological or computer-mediated could also be used almost as synonyms for digital, but for the purposes of this study only the terms digital, online, or internet (as in *digital discourse*, *online discourse* or *internet discourse*) will be used in an attempt to avoid confusion. Digital discourse could be defined as linguistic activity, whereas digital interaction refers to the linguistic activity, such as text messaging or communicating on Skype, of two or more participants in an interactive situation (Helasvuo et al., 2014). This study will focus on digital discourse in the form of tweets, but also highlight the interactive possibilities Twitter offers, especially through hashtags.

One quite unique aspect of the online world is its vastness: users from different countries and extremely different backgrounds can all access these social media websites almost anywhere they are. The fact that many users might not have English as their first language is an important point to remember when studying and examining the specific topic of English language online since it can obviously affect their language use (Helasvuo et al., 2014). Since English is the unofficial lingua franca of the online world, many users who do not speak it as their mother tongue often choose to use it online in order to be better understood. This was an important fact to consider when conducting the study for this thesis, since many grammatical errors and typos occur in the data. As many online users today are quite young, possibly in their teens, it is also important to acknowledge the often unintentional educational function the internet can have; teenagers who are still in the process of learning English but who frequently use these social media websites which feature English as the main language for communication are bound to be influenced by the kind of language they see in these online spaces.

The thing that perhaps sets the internet furthest apart from the real world is its anonymity: although total anonymity is nearly impossible to maintain in real life, it could almost be considered the norm in online spaces. Fox, Cruz, and Lee (2015) examine the topic of online anonymity in their study entitled *Perpetuating online sexism offline: Anonymity, interactivity, and the effects of sexist hashtags on social media*. Although some users choose to tweet under their own names, many prefer not to disclose their identities on Twitter; an exception to this are famous people, such as politicians and celebrities, who often use Twitter to promote themselves or their agendas in some ways, and therefore obviously want their names known. According to Suler (as cited in Fox et al., 2015), one of the factors that encourages people to act differently in online spaces compared to real life is so-called *dissociative anonymity*. On the internet, people can choose which aspects of themselves they want to share with others, and which ones they do not. This distances online users from their real identity, possibly convincing them that their online identity is completely separate from their real-life self (Suler, as cited in Fox et al, 2015).

Anonymity is also an important factor to consider within the framework of this study because it has been proven to encourage uncivil behavior online; Fox et al. (2015) refer to research conducted by Fox & Tang, as well as Kuznekoff & Rose, which suggest that sexist behavior and even sexual harassment happens frequently in anonymous online video game communities. Many glaringly sexist hashtags, such as #LiesToldByFemales, #MyGirlfriendNotAllowedTo, and #ThatsWhatSlutsDo, have also been popular and frequently used on Twitter (Fox et al., 2015). Although this study focuses on hashtags which seek to empower victims of sexism and racism, it is

important to note that some users may also use the same hashtags to make hateful comments in favor of sexist and racist policies. It must also be acknowledged that what happens online does not simply stay online; the results of Fox et al.'s (2015) study indicate that anonymous interaction with sexist content online increases sexist behavior offline as well. This debunks the idea that it is possible to have separate 'online' and 'offline' identities; the way we act and interact in online spaces does have a significant effect on the way we behave in the real world as well.

2.2. Methodology

The term *discourse analysis*, coined by Zellig Harris in 1952, seeks to describe the method of analyzing the relationship between language and the broader socio-cultural contexts in which it is used (Paltridge, 2012). Discourse analysis is a broad field with many types of specialized forms suitable for various disciplines; according to Paltridge (2012), discourse analysis in general could be said to focus on the more textual features of language and discourse, or the more socially oriented features of language and discourse. One of the most important aspects of language that discourse analysis aims to examine is the relationship between language and context; here, the idea of 'context' could be said to include the cultural contexts created by different languages and the cultures that surround them, and social contexts such as the particular social situation where the discourse takes place (Paltridge, 2012). The idea of context is especially important for this current study, as it studies the role of smaller factors (the tweets) in a broader context (political activism in the United States). Discourse analysis also seeks to explore the relationship between language and identity, and the ways in which we shape our identities through language (Paltridge, 2012). The following paragraphs discuss some of these aspects of discourse analysis in more detail, and also introduce the two types of discourse analytic methods used in this current study, critical discourse analysis and digital discourse analysis.

2.2.1. Discourse analysis

As stated above, one of the most important points of view discourse analysis offers has to do with the relationship between language and context. This is also perhaps the most pertinent aspect of discourse analysis in terms of this study, as the tweets and the messages they aim to convey are examined in relation with the broader social and political landscape around them. Harris (as cited in Paltridge, 2012) describes this relationship as the way people can understand how to interpret what others say based on the situation they are in. In some cases of discourse, that which is said could be interpreted very differently in a different situation. Besides the situational context, language also always exists in the broader context of the culture in which it is used; different languages often express things in different ways, and that is why discourse can be understood differently by different language users (Paltridge, 2012). When discussing language and context in online landscapes, it is important to acknowledge that the interactions in these spaces often lack some of the tools we tend to use almost automatically in our real life interactions, such as eye contact and body language. In addition, unintended signals we give off in real-life interactions, such as blushing or tone of voice, cannot occur similarly in online environments. It is also important to notice that the form of online communication Twitter promotes is not primarily interactive; while people can ‘like’, reply to, or retweet others’ tweets, the website is not a discussion forum.

Discourse analysis can also be used to explore the relationship between language and identity. As this current study focuses on the online world, this topic is examined from the point of view of the online landscape. It is important to acknowledge that the ways in which people build their identities online and in real life can be quite different; anonymity is a big factor in the shaping of online identities. Thomas’ (as cited in Paltridge, 2012) study on the relationship between language and identity in online spaces indicates that the way people use language online can reflect the person they wish to be instead of the person they actually are. Online activism has often been criticized for being easy and therefore ‘performative’: it is simple to tweet a short statement advocating for women’s rights or racial equality in order to appear concerned about issues of social justice, but what such tweets do not directly tell us is how many people practice what they preach in real life, for example by participating in protests, or voting in important elections. Social media platforms can be used to craft the perfect image of the person you wish to be.

Another important aspect of discourse analysis this current study examines is the relationship between words and context: that, in this study, being the relationship between the words used in the

tweets and the social and political contexts in which the tweets exist. Cameron and Kulick (as cited in Paltridge, 2012) examine this concept by studying the terms gay, lesbian, and queer in their historical framework. According to Cameron and Kulick (as cited in Paltridge, 2012), words gain their meaning in the contexts in which they are used; people do not consider words in isolation, but that their views of different words are always influenced by the different values, assumptions, meanings, and ideas attached to those words, as well as the words' historical backgrounds. These aspects of discourse analysis are especially pertinent to this paper, as racially or sexually charged language, such as slurs, is tightly connected to different values and morals in different people's minds.

2.2.2. Critical discourse analysis

As stated earlier, critical discourse analysis provides the analytical method for this study. In general, the aim of critical discourse analysis could be said to be to bring to surface the hidden values of discourse (Paltridge, 2012). That is, the values, ideologies, and perspectives which might not be apparent in the discourse at first glance but can be uncovered with a more detailed analysis of the discourse and the topics which surround it. These surrounding topics can be, for example, political issues (Paltridge, 2012) like the ones studied in this paper, racism and sexism. CDA tends to be a highly political research method, and it is often used to uncover misrepresentations of different social groups in discourse (Sriwimon & Zilli, 2017). Critical discourse analysis seeks to examine the relationship between discourse and issues such as the ones mentioned above, and study how these specific issues are reflected in discourse. In general, a critical discourse analysis often consists of a detailed textual analysis of a body of text, and an interpretation of the findings made from said text (Paltridge, 2012). The analysis aims to deconstruct the text in order to examine the underlying implications that it might have. According to Paltridge (2012, p. 186), this can imply "tracing underlying ideologies from the linguistic features of a text, unpacking particular biases and ideological presuppositions underlying the text, and relating the text to other people's experiences and beliefs."

One key area of interest to critical discourse analysis is power, specifically the "semiotic dimensions of power" (Wodak, 2013, p. xix). "The exercise of power usually presupposes mind management, involving the influence of knowledge, beliefs, understanding, plans, attitudes,

ideologies, norms and values” (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 257); it is these unequal power relations that can be uncovered and addressed through CDA (Mullet, 2018). CDA seeks to point out the power imbalances in society in terms of access to discursive resources: smaller elite groups, such as politicians or journalists, have better access to information than the average citizen, thus creating a gap between two groups in society, the speakers and the listeners (Mullet, 2018). However, the internet has somewhat narrowed this gap by allowing people to seek information from a vast pool of online resources and to broadcast their opinions to others on various social media platforms. Today, the difference between the ‘speakers’ and the ‘listeners’, or the ‘creators’ and the ‘consumers’, is less detectable than it used to be before the rise of the internet. This is an important factor to keep in mind while studying online movements created and led by common citizens.

Rogers (as cited in Paltridge, 2012, p. 193), states that critical discourse analysis in general “includes not only a description and interpretation of discourse in context, but also offers an explanation of why and how discourses work.” One way to begin a critical discourse analysis might be to ‘frame’ the text, and to broadly introduce the way in which the content of the text is presented as well as the particular perspective from which it is presented (Paltridge, 2012). In the case of this current study, this includes examining tweets in relation to what the hashtags represent: do the tweets side with the movements’ causes, or against them? What motivations can be detected from the language used in the tweets? Indeed, this type of analysis often includes examining which factors in the text are emphasized, and which ones are played down (Paltridge, 2012). After this, the text might be examined at sentence level (Paltridge, 2012); for example, the analyst may proceed to investigate the main aspects or topics brought forward in each individual sentence. This can also include an examination of the power relations in the particular piece of text (Paltridge, 2012). By following these steps, a researcher can examine the text itself in order to capture its main aspects and possible aims as a piece of discourse.

Moving into the smaller details, a critical discourse analysis can also include examining the text at word and phrase level (Paltridge, 2012); this includes examining the connotations and implied meanings of the words and phrases which appear in the text. According to Paltridge (2012, p. 194), this part of the analysis can also examine the text’s “degree of formality or informality, degree of technicality and what this means for the other participants in the text.” In addition, this type of analysis examines the choice of words apparent in the texts, and the attitudes which those words express (Paltridge, 2012). This is also an important area of focus for this study: since statements on Twitter must be short and concise, every word should (ideally) be carefully chosen to convey the intended message as clearly as possible. In this situation, every word does truly count.

These are, briefly, the areas that a critical discourse analysis often focuses on. However, the form of a critical discourse analysis always reflects the aims and purposes of the particular study and its research questions, and can be altered to suit the goals of the study as effectively as possible (Paltridge, 2012). The most important purpose of a critical discourse analysis is to provide a deeper understanding of a text; to uncover the underlying aims of a particular text, and to examine the ways in which the text seeks to fulfill its intended purpose (Paltridge, 2012). The following section briefly discusses digital discourse analysis, which focuses on analyzing digital texts in their many different forms. Since the data for this study comes from a digital platform, Twitter, it is especially important to have a deeper understanding of how to successfully analyze digital texts.

2.2.3. Digital discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is perhaps most commonly associated with examinations of textual practices in their many different forms. However, our ideas of what a ‘text’ consists of have changed monumentally in the past years. Most noticeably, we have moved from the page into the realms of the internet: the online world is full of different, untraditional textual practices such as using hashtags or participating in international video games. These new practices are challenging traditional ways of thinking about texts, and even language itself (Jones et al., 2015). And as our ideas of texts become more complex, so do the ways in which texts can affect our lives. This requires researchers to invent new ways of examining textual practices in their digital forms in order to better understand their nature. Jones et al. (2015, p. 1) suggest that “even analytical tools designed to examine the ideological dimensions of discourse need to be adapted to contend with discursive environments in which the loci of power are much more diffuse and the instruments of ideological control and discipline are more subtle and complex.” This poses one of the greater challenges for discourse analysts in the digital age.

The world of digital texts is difficult in its vastness: not only are there myriad different websites and digital platforms, there are also a staggering number of physical gadgets to use these digital platforms with. Another challenge is the rapid pace with which technology changes. As old technologies die, new ones take their place. Some iPhone applications turn out to be passing fads, others have more popularity and longevity. It is difficult to predict which of our currently popular digital platforms we will be using in ten years’ time – or even three years’. “In order to cope with

the fast-changing landscape of digital media, discourse analysts need to both draw upon the rich store of theories and methods developed over the years for the analysis of ‘analogue’ discourse, and to formulate new concepts and new methodologies to address the unique combinations of affordances and constraints introduced by digital media”, Jones et al. (2015, p. 1) theorize.

While some aspects of discourse analysis might be easier to adapt to the study of digital media than others, the multifaceted nature of the digital world is in itself quite daunting: digital media can combine texts, pictures, videos, hashtags, soundbites, and animations in a way traditional texts, such as books or printed newspaper articles, are simply incapable of doing. Jones et al. (2015, p. 7) refer to this phenomenon with the term *multimodality*: “one of the most conspicuous characteristics of digital texts that present challenges to discourse analysts is the fact that they are almost always multimodal, consisting of rich combinations of semiotic modes like writing visuals and sound.” This differs greatly from the traditional ideas of ‘text’ as simply writing, and therefore requires discourse analysts to radically change their viewpoints towards their main topic.

Another area that poses challenges for researchers in the field of digital discourse is context. A complicated concept even with more traditional textual forms, the digital world confuses the idea of context even further. Ideas of time and space, of location and culture, become either irrelevant or nearly impossible to define: the online and offline worlds merge, people from across the world interact effortlessly in real time, and cultural influences are exchanged globally. Jones et al. (2015, p. 15) also encourage researchers to remember that while examining the digital world, they are also participating in it: “another important theme that emerges is the role of digital technology not just as an object of research but also as a research tool.” Researchers must navigate the difficult role of not only being an objective observer of digital technology, but also an active employer of its tools, and a participant in its world.

These are some of the aspects of discourse analysis that need to be kept in mind while conducting this study. As stated earlier, each research topic requires its own combination of analytical tools: for this paper, ideas of identity are especially important, since race and gender are closely linked to people’s perceptions of themselves. Another key concept is context, in this case the political landscape of the United States. By examining the relationship between these two areas of interest, this study aims to explore how hashtag activism functions in society. In the following section, hashtag activism will be discussed in more detail, and the two movements examined in this paper, #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo, will be introduced.

3. Hashtag activism

This section introduces the reader to the key concept of this study, *hashtag activism*. Its unique qualities in the world of social movements, as well as the reasons for its popularity within certain sections of the population, are explained in more detail; this is done in order to provide a clearer picture of the phenomenon itself before delving into the specific hashtag movements which are at the center of this paper, #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. These two movements are explored after the hashtag activism section, with details of how and why they originated, as well as what goals and purposes they have.

3.1. Twitter as a political venue

Twitter is a popular social media website visited by people around the world. It allows its users to share short, 280-character statements with their followers, and to follow news and events through their Twitter feeds; the website's front page declares "see what's happening in the world right now" (Twitter, 2020). As the slogan suggests, one of the most groundbreaking features of Twitter is its up-to-dateness, for lack of a better word. Nowadays, many breaking news stories are shared first by journalists on Twitter. Journalists also "report using Twitter to find story leads, follow politicians, and equate Twitter content with other information subsidies such as campaign press releases" (Conway et al., 2015, p. 366). Andreas Jungherr (2014, p. 239) describes social media's prevalence in politics by stating that "social media services have become areas of political communication. Politicians integrate them in their campaigns, journalists use them as sources and topics, and the public uses them for the discussion of politics." The world of Twitter could be said to have become deeply intertwined with the world of politics.

3.2. A platform for the marginalized

Hashtag activism is described by Tombleson & Wolf (2017, p. 15), as the "act of fighting for or supporting a cause with the use of hashtags as the primary channel to raise awareness of an issue and encourage debate via social media." In addition to spreading information about social issues

and inciting discussion among people, hashtag activism has been argued to be an active force in promoting policy changes and enforcing democracy (Xiong et al., 2019, citing Holtzhausen, 2000, and others). This suggests that although hashtag activism is often characterized as performative and limited to the digital world, it can facilitate progress in the real world as well. Because the phenomenon is relatively new, the term has not yet become a part of the everyday lexicon; more common phrases such as *digital activism*, *internet activism*, or *online activism* are related to similar phenomena in the larger scope of cyberspace, but hashtag activism is specific to Twitter. In the wider landscape of political activism, hashtag activism is unique for many reasons:

“The introduction of Twitter hashtags was a watershed moment for social activism. By repurposing the hashtag (conceived by its developers as a tool for interpersonal communication) as a vehicle for disruptive acts of political resistance, hashtag activists offered a new idea: that the sharing of ideas in digital spaces might itself be a form of radical resistance” (Fang, 2015, p. 139).

The simple act of sharing thoughts, experiences, and ideas online to form a collective voice for the underrepresented was revolutionary.

It is no coincidence that the first cases of online activism were orchestrated by people of color. According to one study, people of color are more likely to own a smartphone, and they also consume more digital media than white people (Nielsen, 2013, as cited in Fang, 2015); Smith’s (2014) study on black people’s use of technology indicates that college-aged African-Americans have a much higher rate of Twitter use than their white counterparts (40% compared to 28%). In the world of Twitter, an influential community of black users, often referred to as ‘Black Twitter’, share their thoughts on the world around them (Gibson, 2018). “People of color are the internet’s earliest adopters, and digital spaces have become their primary gathering place”, Fang (2015, p. 139) summarizes.

The reason that the internet appeals to racial minorities as a gathering place is that it offers an even ground: unlike traditional media outlets, such as newspapers and television, anyone can use the internet as a platform to voice their opinions. Thus, it gives disenfranchised and oppressed minorities opportunities for political organizing that the real world often fails to offer: “the internet empowers traditionally excluded people with the tools to create their own spaces for self-expression, movement-building, and grassroots-organizing” (Fang, 2015, p. 139). As Jackson (2016) observes, especially younger people have utilized the online world to bring the voices of the marginalized into the mainstream: “[...] millennial activists have rejected the respectability politics

that guided much of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and have turned to new technologies as tools for the promulgation and solidification of messages, nurturing a counterpublic community that centers the voices of those most often at the margins” (p. 375).

3.3. Distributed framing

Ince, Rojas, and Davis (2017), referring to previous research, suggest that the most important thing social movements do is present social issues in a certain way; they call this a “process of meaning construction” through which audiences form their opinions on social issues according to the narrative offered by a specific social movement. To refer to the phenomenon of how activists present their narratives, Snow (1986) coined the term *movement frame*: “framing allows activists to depict some policy, or state of affairs, as morally suspect or illegitimate [...]” (Ince et al, 2017). Penney and Dadas’ (2013) research on the #OccupyWallStreet movement suggests that today’s activists use Twitter, especially its retweet function, to tell news stories from different points of view. Links to news items from mainstream media outlets can be introduced in the users’ own words, thus drawing the reader’s attention to different details of the story: “by writing new headlines, activists could not only help their followers quickly understand and easily index the articles, but also reframe the material in their own terms” (Penney & Dadas, 2013, p. 8). Although there is much research on movement frames in general, Ince et al. (2017) point out that studies on how the wider public reacts to and interacts with social movements are relatively rare. However, when examining a movement born on social media, focusing on the wider public is highly necessary.

To refer to movements in which the collective voices of a wider audience on social media form the narrative of the movement, as in the case of hashtag activism on Twitter, Ince et al. (2017) introduce the term *distributed framing*:

“[...] Framing via hashtags is one way that movements develop an understanding of problems and solutions that does not exclusively rely on leaders within the movement or other highly visible individuals. Instead, a larger audience can append their own meanings to the messages emanating from a movement and create communities focused around more specific issues.”

Social media is a near-perfect platform for free, non-hierarchical exchange of ideas. Although hashtag movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo are not exactly leaderless, their ideologies stem first and foremost from the hashtag interactions of the general public on Twitter. Xiong et al. (2019) call this the *co-creational* nature of hashtag activism. Finally, as Ince et al. (2017) observe, social media also allows critics of social movements the opportunity to define the movements differently by voicing their dissenting opinions and offering alternative solutions to social issues. It is the collective voices of both the critics and supporters that give an online movement its final shape.

3.4. Positives and negatives

Indeed, while the unique possibilities offered by social media are often positive, such as the ones examined above, the online world can also cause unique problems. Malgorzata Szabla and Jan Blommaert (2017) explore one of these downsides in their essay on *context collapse*; the phenomenon is defined as “the flattening out of multiple distinct audiences in one’s social network, such that people from different contexts become part of a singular group of message recipients (Vitak, 2012, as cited in Blommaert & Szabla, 2017, p. 2). According to Blommaert and Szabla (2017), the audience one *imagines* themselves addressing on social media is often very different from the *real* audience that is addressed. This differs from real life face-to-face interactions in which one can know for certain who they are speaking to:

“People (it is presumed) used to know quite clearly with whom they interacted and, thus, how they should interact. The big problem caused by SNS lies in the latter’s unique affordances: communication through SNS is persistent, replicable, scalable, searchable and shareable – features, all of them, that characterize communication beyond the immediate interactional situation [...]” (Blommaert & Szabla, 2017, p. 3).

In the case of hashtag activism that relies partly on the collective voices of Twitter users, this could be said to cause a disconnection between the different kinds of people interacting within the movement. For example, comments made by a #BlackLivesMatter activist online can reach the ears of an anti-black individual, who has an opposite reaction to the message than the intended like-minded audience.

In her article debating the promises and risks of hashtag activism, Caroline Dadas (2017) suggests that when drawing the larger public's attention to important causes such as racism or sexism, hashtag activism often ends up obscuring the difficult and complex histories of such issues. Because as a social media platform, Twitter promotes conciseness above all things – tweets must be limited to 280 characters – is it the suitable venue for discussions of socio-historically multifaceted topics? Many critics have stated that hashtags are unable to convey the contexts of the issues they aim to highlight (Gay, 2013, Goldberg, 2014, and others, as cited by Dadas, 2017): “in short”, Dadas (2017) writes, “the complex politics, histories, and economics that led to these injustices cannot be reduced to a hashtag” (p. 18). To combat the backgrounding of important information, Dadas (2017) suggests that hashtag activists “need an understanding of the political and historical context of the issue(s) they are describing” (p. 18). Simply tweeting the hashtag is not enough.

In addition to the positive sides of Twitter discussed above – that it offers a platform for those often excluded from socio-political discussions, and promotes co-creational activism – Dadas (2017, p. 19) mentions the “speed and ease” with which people can communicate. Because of the informal nature of modern social media, messages can travel between both friends and strangers alike, ensuring that they reach a large audience. In coining successful hashtags, brevity is key: “the hashtag must be short enough so that future participants will have plenty of space to add their own messages [...]” (Dadas, 2017, p. 20). Another defining function of Twitter is the ability to retweet other people's content, either by simply retweeting the original tweet unaltered, or by adding your own text to the tweet. In many ways, the retweet function is one of the most important tools activists can use when spreading their message: “by retweeting a message, a Twitter user can spur a tweet's velocity by circulating it beyond the author's visible network (people s/he is following or is followed by)” (Dadas, 2017, p. 21). As a social media platform, Twitter allows its users to form complex interactive networks quite effortlessly, therefore also allowing information to flow both quickly and with ease. The next section of this study will dive into the details of one Twitter movement, #BlackLivesMatter, and its success story.

4. #BlackLivesMatter

This section explores the #BlackLivesMatter movement in more detail in order to give the reader a clearer picture of one of the main topics of this study. First, the beginnings of the movement will be discussed, followed by its steady rise to mainstream public knowledge in the United States. The protesting methods of the activists will be explained with examples, as well as some of the many causes the movement aims to fight for, and the successes it has achieved. Finally, this section will also touch on the radical intersectionality the creators of #BlackLivesMatter wish to promote.

4.1. From police brutality to on-campus racism

The #BlackLivesMatter movement began in 2013 in the aftermath of the acquittal of George Zimmerman who was on trial for the murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African American teenager he shot to death in a physical struggle (Altman et al., 2015). In an article in *Time* magazine, Altman et al. (2015) describe the birth of the movement:

“Alicia Garza, a worker’s-right’s activist, was nursing a drink at an Oakland, Calif., cocktail bar when the verdict came down. She dashed off a missive on Facebook, capped by a stirring sentiment: ‘Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter.’ Her friend Patrisse Cullors, a fellow California activist, was the one who added the hashtag” (p. 118).

During protests held in remembrance of Trayvon Martin, the phrase #BlackLivesMatter began to appear on signs and banners (Altman et al., 2015). In an article in *The Feminist Wire*, Alicia Garza describes the movement as a “response to the anti-black racism that permeates our society”: “Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression” (Garza, 2014).

Garza’s statement inspired many people across the country. Although the phrase ‘black lives matter’ is rather broad and can therefore be applied to many aspects of the struggle for racial equality, it was first and foremost utilized as a rallying cry against police brutality. Ince, Rojas, &

Davis (2017) detail the events that led to increased support for the movement: “‘BLM’ trickled into national discourse after several police killings of unarmed African-Americans, including the killing of Michael Brown: Staten Island resident Eric Garner on 17 July 2014, Dayton, Ohio resident John Crawford on 5 August 2014, and Los Angeles resident Ezell Ford on 11 August 2014.” The movement created a narrative of the struggle against police brutality and racism through black voices and experiences, which was not often offered in the mainstream media.

The message of #BlackLivesMatter was eagerly adapted on college campuses as well, and the power of the hashtag did not go unnoticed. One example of its influence are the #BlackOnCampus (#BOC) protests that spread through American universities in 2015; using the hashtag to amplify their voices, African-American students shared their experiences and expressed their concerns with university administrations’ lacking responses to complaints of racism on college campuses (Altman et al., 2015). According to Casarae L. Gibson (2018), #BlackLivesMatter resonated with black students to the point where it “became a collective space about social media at colleges and universities where Black American students in the 21st century could form ongoing demonstrations against racism, continuing what their forefathers and foremothers started on campuses across the country during the CRM and subsequent Black Freedom Movements of the 1960s” (pp. 394-395). The civil rights movement (or CRM, as abbreviated above) and its influence on American society will be discussed further on in this paper.

4.2. Physical protesting

Although the name of the movement is presented in the form of a hashtag, thus conveying an image of so-called ‘keyboard activism’, the focus of the uprising is very much in the real world. According to Altman et al. (2015, p. 121), the key to #BlackLivesMatter protests is the “physical occupation of public space”, and the movement uses social media to spread and amplify its message. Good examples of how the movement functions can be found on college campuses across the United States: videos of racist incidents are shared on social media, outraged students create hashtags on Twitter, the story spreads and campus protests are arranged, and – in some cases – the instigators of racism face consequences. Altman et al. (2015) describe such an incident from University of Missouri, where Tim Wolf, the system president, was under fire for not responding to accusations of racism on campus. After a hunger strike was arranged by the students, and the college’s football

team refused to participate in team activities as a protest, Wolf resigned from his duties. With their disruptive methods, #BlackLivesMatter activists refuse to be pushed to the margins and choose instead to loudly interrupt and demand attention on the national stage. From sit-ins and highway shutdowns to interrupting political rallies, #BLM activists insist on being given the political platforms they have long been denied.

As the #BlackLivesMatter movement has gained support and influence, its power to incite political change has grown as well. In a meeting with Hillary Clinton, who at the time was in the running to become the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, #BlackLivesMatter activists confronted her with demands for racial justice. Their voices were heard: "at a Democratic debate a few days later, Clinton denounced mass incarceration, called for body cameras on every cop and proposed a 'new New Deal' for communities of color" (Altman et al., 2015, p. 118). Later on, Clinton composed her promises into a criminal-justice platform that planned to restrict the militarization of police forces, and advocate for more thorough investigations into alleged police misconduct (Altman et al., 2015). This is one good example illustrating the ways in which protests from #BlackLivesMatter activists can bring about real policy changes in the United States.

4.3. Intersectionality

Finally, when discussing #BlackLivesMatter activism, it is vital to underscore its radical intersectionality. The term *intersectionality* refers to "the complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). This can be illustrated, for example, in how black gay women face both similar and different kinds of hardship and discrimination than black straight women, or white gay women. Although #BlackLivesMatter has been criticized for encouraging racial divisions instead of undoing them, and counter-movements such as #AllLivesMatter and #BlueLivesMatter ('blue' referring to the police force) have been created in protest, the founders of the movement have always insisted on their message reaching all those in the margins who have not had their voices heard before. "Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum", Opal Tometi, Patrisse Cullors, and Alicia Garza state (Jackson, 2016, p. 376). Indeed, Sarah J. Jackson (2016) suggests that one of the most important things #BlackLivesMatter has achieved is bringing the

struggles faced by minorities *within* the black community, such as black women and black LGBTQ individuals, into mainstream public discourse.

5. Historical context: the civil rights movement

This section of the paper discusses the history of protesting in the name of racial equality in the United States; this is done by examining the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The civil rights movement could be described as one of the most successful nonviolent uprisings in United States history, and it changed the fabric of American society in countless ways. Not only did the movement achieve monumental political victories, it also challenged the racist attitudes and beliefs held by many Americans, and thus planted the seeds for future progress as well.

5.1. Rosa Parks' legacy

Although protesting against racist policies has a long history in the United States, perhaps the most prolific time for civil action was the 1950s and 1960s, the era of the civil rights movement. The Movement called for racial equality and sought to advance the rights and freedoms of African Americans (Matthews, 2000). In his essay *So Much History, So Much Future: Martin Luther King Jr., and the Second Coming of America* (2003, pp. 130-146), Vincent Harding describes the beginning of the movement through King's eyes:

“Then, just a bit more than a year after he had been in Montgomery, not long after he had completed his doctoral dissertation for Boston University, while thoughts of a relatively easy life as part-pastor and part-academic danced in his head, a strong, gentle woman named Rosa Parks refused to do the usual, agonized black dance on a segregated Montgomery bus. As a result, she was arrested, and a new time was opened in the struggle [...]”

Through their non-violent protests, #BlackLivesMatter activists have continued Rosa Parks' legacy of determined defiance. By the forceful occupation of public spaces, the movement seeks to disrupt the numbing flow of everyday life: “causing discomfort is designed to make society feel the pain and frustration of living as a black person in America” (Altman et al., 2015, p. 121).

5.2. The growth of the movement

Inspired by Rosa Parks' bravery in the face of discriminatory laws, black activists organized a groundbreaking boycott of Montgomery's bus system in 1955. During 381 days of protesting a mass movement formed around the bus boycotts, which ended only when the US Supreme Court ruled for the desegregation of the city's bus system a year after the protests began (McGhee, p. 252). The success of the boycott catapulted King into the political limelight, and together with his supporters he continued to organize massive protests against policies that kept the American society racially segregated. As the civil rights movement gained momentum and the protesting crowds grew bigger, the uprising transformed from a collection of smaller, individual acts of defiance into a full-blown political force. "From sit-ins and freedom riders we have into rent strikes, boycotts, community organization, and political action", Bayard Rustin (2003, pp. 151-161) describes the movement's steady progress.

5.3. Acts of defiance

But although progress was made and large groups of people came together to present a united political front against racial injustice, perhaps the most inspiring stories can be found in the bravery of the individuals who faced angry, hateful mobs while peacefully protesting for their own basic human rights. In a short essay describing such an act of defiance, Anne Moody (2003, pp. 146-151) recounts her experience of a sit-in at a lunch-counter in Jackson, Mississippi. When sitting at a previously segregated lunch counter, Moody and her friends were told that they would only be served at the back counter, which used to be reserved for black people. When Moody and the others refused to move, the waitresses ran away. Slowly, crowds began to gather to observe the situation, and eventually violence broke out from the crowds surrounding the peaceful protesters. Moody recounts: "The mob started smearing us with ketchup, mustard, sugar, pies, and everything on the counter. Soon Joan and I were joined by John Salter, but the moment he sat down he was hit on the jaw with what appeared to be brass knuckles. Blood gushed from his face and someone threw salt into the open wound." From today's point of view, this kind of violence against such a simple act feels difficult to comprehend. However, although such obviously racist hatred and oppression has seemingly quieted down in recent decades, it has not disappeared but simply taken on new forms:

police brutality, anti-immigration sentiments, and the rise of populism are but a few ways in which racism presents itself today.

5.4. A modern viewpoint

Although the message and actions of the civil rights movement were radical in its time, the movement had many aspects that could be considered conservative, especially from today's point of view. As Glenna Matthews (2000, p. 69) points out, women's contributions to the fight for equality were often overlooked or shadowed by the actions of their male counterparts: "women played a role in that struggle that is still underappreciated, because certain male leaders – above all, Martin Luther King, Jr. – received so much attention and because women's contributions were so often 'invisible.'" Jackson (2016, p. 377) also suggests that today the remaining "middle-class, churchgoing, Black elite" of the civil rights movement is often too concerned with maintaining "values of respectability", and as a result end up dismissing the real complaints voiced by those calling for more intersectional politics within the anti-racism movement.

6. #MeToo

This section introduces the second hashtag movement examined in this study, #MeToo. The beginnings of the movement are briefly discussed, followed by a more thorough discussion of its explosive success in late 2017. Since this paper is focused on the United States, the #MeToo movement is also considered mostly from an American point of view. However, it is important to note that the movement's success was global, and that societies all over the world began to rise up for gender equality as the revolution roared on. This world-wide success also separates #MeToo from the other hashtag movement examined in this study, #BlackLivesMatter, which is more specifically connected to the history and events of American society. After discussing the events that led to the success of #MeToo, this section touches briefly on the *Time's Up* organization, which was conceived as a vehicle to fight the injustices that #MeToo unearthed.

6.1. The beginning

The #MeToo movement was originally created in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke in support of survivors of sexual harassment and abuse, with a specific focus on marginalized communities of people of color (Shugerman, 2017). Speaking about the 'Me Too' slogan, Burke declared it was a "catchphrase to be used from survivor to survivor to let folks know that they were not alone and that a movement for radical healing was happening and possible" (Shugerman, 2017). The movement reached the wider public in October 2017, when actress Alyssa Milano posted a message advocating for the exposure of sexual harassment with the caption "if you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet" (Milano, 2017). The tweet went quickly viral with thousands of women sharing their stories of sexual harassment and violence alongside the hashtag #MeToo. The movement's success was also spurred on by journalists such as Ronan Farrow and Jodi Kantor, whose detailed stories brought more injustices to light (Langone, 2018).

6.2. Scandals and consequences

In 2017, the spotlight shone first and foremost on Hollywood. As many actresses came forward with similar stories of sexual harassment perpetrated by producer Harvey Weinstein, the plight women suffer in the entertainment industry was gradually exposed. Actresses accused Weinstein of inappropriate sexual suggestions, of exposing himself, of asking them for massages or propositioning to take showers with them; Ronan Farrow's article in the *New Yorker* "detailed additional accusations, including rape, and described the well-staffed machine that deceived women into spending time alone with a man everyone knew was a predator" (Zacharek, 2017, p. 30). As Stephanie Zacharek (2017) observes in *Time* magazine, the issue was not a new one: "the concept of the casting couch is as old as Hollywood itself, and the tacit code of silence about it is just as old. Actresses who have been propositioned – or worse – by moguls have long opted to remain silent for fear of losing parts" (p. 28).

While the issue of sexual harassment in Hollywood was old, the new, radical aspect of #MeToo was that the abusers began to face consequences for their actions: "amid the wave of allegations and outcry from other Hollywood luminaries, Weinstein was fired. The Weinstein Company's all-male board was divided on his fate. Within 48 hours, four board members had resigned" (Zacharek, 2017, p. 30). Following Weinstein's downfall, a barrage of stories of other high-profile men from different industries flooded the news cycle. Both right-wing and liberal-leaning men were among the accused. From Bill Cosby to Kevin Spacey to Al Franken to Donald Trump, the months following the viral success of #MeToo exposed the issue of sexual harassment for what it is: a systematic problem that hurts women in all walks of life. Although many predators were publicly shamed and condemned, many still clung to their positions. Donald Trump, accused by several women of sexual harassment (Zacharek, 2017), remains the president of the United States. In 2018, Brett Kavanaugh, accused publicly of attempted rape by Doctor Christine Blasey Ford, was elected as a new Supreme Court judge despite the detailed allegations (Sweetland Edwards, 2018).

6.3. Time's Up

The success of the #MeToo movement inspired the creation of *Time's Up*, an organization advocating for the equal treatment of women in society. While their goals are similar, Time's Up

offers more tangible solutions to the injustices that surfaced through the #MeToo movement. “Time’s Up can be thought of as a solution-based, action-oriented next step in the #MeToo movement”, Langone (2018) writes, adding that “the organization’s aim is to create concrete change, leading to safety and equity in the workplace.” Spear-headed by some of the biggest names in Hollywood, such as Natalie Portman and Reese Witherspoon, Time’s Up is focused on changing the laws and policies that support the discrimination of women in the workplace, as well as creating more opportunities for women to thrive and succeed. To pursue these goals, the organization formed a defense fund which offers a “source of legal and financial support for women and men who want to fight sexual misconduct through the justice system” (Langone, 2018). Although some initially dismissed #MeToo as a passing moment rather than a radical movement, the hard-working activists took it beyond the online world into the streets, workplaces, and courtrooms.

7. Historical context: second-wave feminism

This section discusses a moment in history related to the #MeToo phenomenon, the birth of second-wave feminism. This is done in order to give some context to the progress made in women's rights prior to the emergence of hashtag activism, and to showcase the activist work that spurred the feminist movement forward in the latter half of the 1900s. First, the beginnings of the second wave of feminism are discussed, followed by a more in-depth exploration of two protest events: the Miss America and Miss Black America protests of 1968. These two examples will highlight the intersectionality of the feminist and civil rights movements, as well as the tensions between them. It is important to note that black women, because of their racial and gender identities, often felt excluded from both the primarily white feminist movement as well as the male-dominated civil rights movement. Although today's feminism seeks to promote ideas of intersectionality and diversity, such ideas were only beginning to surface in mainstream consciousness during the second wave.

7.1. The birth of second-wave feminism

Much like the civil rights movement, the feminist movement benefited greatly from the radical changes the American society went through during World War II. Before 1940, the idea of a married, well-to-do woman holding a job was unthinkable; however, the urgent need for labor during the wartime gave an opening for women to join the work force. As Chafe et al. (2003) observe, discrimination persisted in the workplace as well: "women were paid less than men, they were barred from executive positions, and despite wartime necessity, the government failed to provide or support day care centers in numbers adequate to meet the needs of working parents" (pp. 177-180). When the war was over, women were once again forced into the confines of the home and taught to seek fulfillment only through marriage and children. But although some of the progress made during the wartime was quickly reversed, the climate had changed, and many women continued to pursue careers and independence despite the pressure to commit to traditional gender roles (Chafe et al., 2003).

It was in these post-war conditions that the feminist movement restored its strength: "at least partly because of such changes, a revitalized feminism became possible in the late 1960s, exposing the

contradiction between traditional definitions of women's place and the new frequency with which women were assuming active economic, political, and social roles outside the home" (Chafe et al., 2003, pp. 177-180). What has been dubbed the 'second wave' of feminism, often defined by its diversity and radical tactics, was born. Second-wave feminism existed in the intersection of many other movements, and was entangled with the anti-war movement, the quest for racial equality, as well as sexual liberation and LGBTQ rights. Although the movement was initially dismissed as a shallow cry for preferential treatment – and even today second-wave feminist activists are too often thought of as simply bra-burning radicals – in time it turned into "one of the most significant forces of social change in the 1960s and 1970s" (Chafe et al., 2003, pp. 177-180). The sections below will describe one of the starting points of second-wave feminism, the Miss America protest, and contrast it with the Miss Black America pageant held on the same day in 1968. This will showcase the interplay between the feminist and anti-racist movements, and explore their differences and similarities.

7.2. No More Miss America!

Often described as the beginning of radical feminism, the 1968 Atlantic City protests organized by the New York Radical Women (NYRW) sought to rally against the impossible beauty standards all women are taught to aspire to. The decision to protest against the Miss America pageant was a very deliberate one: with its strict rules for perfect appearance – blond hair, white skin – sexual chastity, sobriety, and demands for 'family values', the contest was a symbol of conservative womanhood. Although the pageant's status has sunk in recent years, at the time of the protests the show was viewed by many millions of Americans on their TV screens, in addition to the large live audience. Because of its popularity, the Miss America contest shaped many young girls' ideas of their identities: "given the high ratings and national publicity accorded to the pageant and Miss America herself, it is likely that many American girls were raised with the dream of becoming Miss America", Beth Kreydatus (2008) writes, adding that "in 1960s America, at a time when few girls were encouraged to aspire to be the nation's president, a scientist, a CEO, or a sports hero, becoming Miss America was one of the loftiest goals a girl could have" (p. 493).

In their declaration *No More Miss America*, Robin Morgan and the NYRW lay out their case against the pageant. The contest is likened to "the 4-H Club county fair, where the nervous animals

are judged for teeth, fleece, etc., and where the best specimen gets the blue ribbon” (Morgan, 2003, pp. 198-202); Miss America is supposed to have looks, not personality. The ‘ten points’ of the declaration also criticize the visit the crowned Miss America makes to American troops abroad with the intention of promoting the military agenda, and condemns the capitalist conglomerates that keep the pageant in business. Morgan (2003) also criticizes the racism of the contest, pointing out that “since its inception in 1921, the Pageant has not had one Black finalist, and this has not been for a lack of test-case contestants. There has never been a Puerto Rican, Alaskan, Hawaiian, or Mexican-American winner. Nor has there ever been a *true* Miss America – an American Indian” (pp. 198-202). Above all, the oppressive nature of the pageant and its focus on beauty is condemned: “men are judged by their actions, women by their appearance” (Morgan, 2003, pp. 198-202).

The tactics employed by the protesters were theatrical, and caused much controversy: “feminists threw their bras – along with ‘women garbage’ such as girdles, false eyelashes, steno pads, wigs, women’s magazines, and dishcloths – into a ‘Freedom Trash Can’” [...] (Kreydatus, 2008, p. 490); the activists also gave street performances, one of the most memorable ones being a skit called ‘cattle auction’ where women were tied to an enormous Miss America doll and supposedly auctioned off to the highest bidder (Welch, 2015). The activists also famously refused to be interviewed by male journalists or arrested by male police officers, and the event was advertised as a ‘women-only’ protest. Although no bras were actually burned during the Atlantic City protests, the event gave birth to the well-known idea of ‘bra-burning feminists’ (Kreydatus, 2008). The image of women burning their bras gave a titillating story to the press, and simultaneously trivialized the very real concerns of the protesters; as Kreydatus (2008) observes, the supposed bra-burnings were portrayed as petty and shallow compared to male anti-war protesters burning their draft cards or flags. The protests were quickly condemned by the general public, and the feminists participating in them were depicted as communists or lesbians, or simply as unattractive women who were jealous of the pageant contestants’ beauty (Welch, 2015; Kreydatus, 2008). These responses highlight the negative attitudes many had towards the radical women’s movement, and the tendency society had – and still has – to trivialize women’s pain.

7.3. Celebrating black beauty

On the exact same day as the protests against the Miss America contest, another event took place in Atlantic City. The Miss Black America contest, organized by local Philadelphia activists with the help of the NAACP, railed against the Miss America pageant with a different strategy: by holding a contest celebrating black beauty, the “beauty pageant drew attention to the racist beauty standards that pervaded the all-white Miss America Pageant and American culture generally” (Kreydatus, 2008, p. 491). The winner of the Miss Black America contest, Saundra Williams, was a NAACP member and wore her hair in a natural afro while accepting her award (Kreydatus, 2008). Although the idea of protesting through a beauty pageant was found trivial by some civil rights activists, Welch (2015) points out that appearances can be politicized: “beauty can, in fact, be a political strategy that marginalized communities and individual women use to remake racial identity and its place within the larger society” (pp. 72-73). In the 1960s, chants of ‘Black is Beautiful’ challenged western, Euro-centric ideas of beauty, and the Miss Black America contest chose to celebrate black beauty only, taking a stand against the idea of a racially-integrated pageant featuring both white and black contestants (Welch, 2015). According to Welch (2015), the Miss Black America pageant took place at a cross-roads in the history of the civil rights movement, when some activists began to question the politics of respectability that had dominated the movement before, and began to opt for more radical approaches.

While the protests against the Miss America pageant have often been portrayed as a ‘white feminist’ event excluding black women, Welch (2015) argues against such an interpretation. One of the women involved in organizing the event was Florynce ‘Flo’ Kennedy, “an African American lawyer, feminist, and civil rights activist noted for defending Black Power radicals and instigating inventive political protests” (Welch, 2015, p. 71). Although Kennedy was a high-profile, famous activist, her contributions to the women’s protests have often been overlooked (Welch, 2015). Although both groups declared fighting racism as one of their goals, the Miss America protests and the Miss Black America pageant are often depicted as fully separate entities, which leaves black women in the middle, forced to choose between their gender and race. This binary thinking was enforced by the media, which ran articles on both events, positioning them in competition. Furthermore, interviews given by Robin Morgan of the NYRW, and Saundra Williams, the crowned Miss Black America, added fuel to the fire: while Morgan stated that she was against all beauty pageants, including Miss Black America, Williams reportedly “looked bored” when asked to

comment on the feminist protests (Kreydatus, 2008, p. 501). As Kreydatus (2008) points out, “for African American women, dealing with double oppression (sexism and racism) has complicated their participation in both black and feminist organizations” (p. 501).

8. Data and analysis

This section introduces the reader to the data gathered for this study, and provide a deeper analysis of its contents. The tweets were collected from Twitter on 14.-15.3.2019 and 16.4.2019 by searching the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo hashtags. Because the focus of this study is primarily on text and hashtag use, and Twitter allows its users to add links, pictures, videos, and other additional features to their tweets, some filtering measures were necessary: the data gathered for this study consists of tweets that feature *no* other elements except text, hashtags, or usernames. Tweets that feature videos or links to articles outside Twitter, for example, are not included in the data. This was done for multiple reasons: analyzing videos or pictures would add a whole another dimension to this study and go beyond its scope; some copyright or privacy issues might surface if pictures or videos featuring people were included in the data; if links to other websites were included, this would again stretch this study beyond its intended limits, as the contents of the links would need to be analyzed. Only tweets in English are included. Additionally, the data does not include tweets that are replies; only “stand-alone” tweets were gathered. In order to respect the privacy of the Twitter users whose tweets are featured in the data, their usernames and profile pictures are not included. A total of 70 tweets were collected, 35 from each hashtag.

The first step after data collection was to organize the tweets into different categories based on their content. In order to achieve a bigger picture of how the hashtags are used, the tweets were divided into three categories: *Supportive*, *Critical*, and *Unclear*. As can be gathered from the titles, the tweets were grouped together depending on whether they appeared to support the causes promoted by #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo, or to criticize or oppose them. The third category, *Unclear*, included the tweets with messages that were difficult to decipher or place in either of the other categories. After this process, the total of tweets in each category was counted. With #BlackLivesMatter, the *Supportive* category included 21 tweets, *Critical* 2, and *Unclear* 12. With #MeToo, the *Supportive* category consisted of 18 tweets, *Critical* 9, and *Unclear* 8. As these number show, the tweets seem to be divided quite similarly within both hashtags, with the *Supportive* category being the largest in both cases, although the division between *Critical* and *Unclear* differs between the two movements. In the following section, examples of tweets from each of the categories will be presented, along with some initial conclusions that can be drawn from their contents.

8.1. Analysis

Some of the tweets collected from the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo hashtags are presented below. First the *Supportive* category will be discussed through a few examples, followed by *Critical*, and finally *Unclear*. The messages and details of the tweets are analyzed more thoroughly in this section, while the final findings and conclusions are presented further on in sections 9 and 10. The examples here do not include emojis that were used in some of the tweets since only the textual content is analyzed.

8.1.1. *Supportive*

This category includes the tweets that appear to support the #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo movements in one way or another. Some of the tweets in this group strike a more personal note, while others refer to bigger news stories and public events; some tweets are more clearly pro-#BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo, while others are less straight-forward in their messages.

Example 1.1.

We are the generation of equality.

We are the generation of political activity.

We are the generation of compassion and empathy.

We are the generation that will fix the world that your generation has broken.

#Strike4Climate #MarchForOurLives #BlackLivesMatter #BeEqual

The first example presented above is a very general, uplifting statement. It seeks to differentiate “us”, the current generation, from “you”, the previous one by using a classic us vs. them

divisioning. The use of the inclusive “we” draws the reader in, and attempts to make them feel as if they are a part of something significant. While the previous generation is simply associated with a “broken” world, the current generation is defined by positive qualities, such as equality, compassion, and empathy. Along with #BlackLivesMatter, the tweet includes other hashtags, such as #Strike4Climate and #MarchForOurLives, linking the message to pursuits of progress in other areas, such as climate change and gun control. Because of the way the tweet is phrased, the hashtag movements are also connected with the values the “new” generation represents, while the “older” generations are excluded from equality, political activity, etc. The use of the other hashtags also makes the tweet available to more Twitter users, thus perhaps increasing its popularity. Despite the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, the tweet does not make an explicit comment on racial issues, but rather seems to make a very broad statement that could appeal to a large audience.

Example 1.2.

Say their name. Calvin McKinnis, 2015-12-14 #BlackLivesMatter

The second example in this category is a short and simple statement which refers to a shooting incident in New Orleans that left a 33-year-old African American man, Calvin McKinnis, dead (“Man killed”, 2015). McKinnis was shot by a NOPD police officer, which ties the case directly to the #BlackLivesMatter movement and its fight against police brutality. The tweet simply encourages the reader to remember the name of the victim; the use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, however, connects the death of McKinnis to the larger epidemic of police brutality against African Americans in the United States. Without the hashtag, the tweet’s purpose might be left unclear, but the inclusion of #BlackLivesMatter at the end of the tweet ensures that people familiar with the movement will understand the tweet’s intended message. Another similar tweet occurs in the data for this study, with a different name and date; this suggests that the account that the tweets are from might be devoted to posting the names African Americans who have died at the hands of the police. Unlike example 1.1, this tweet does not attempt to send a universal message, but rather points to a specific case as part of a larger problem in the country.

Example 1.3.

So I won't be going to @AMCTheatres anymore I rather drive out my way to @CobbTheatres and be greeted with non biased staff members. #LarryShelton #BlackLivesMatter #boycottAmctheaters

The third example presented above is a very personal statement compared to the two previous tweets. The writer declares that they refuse to see movies at AMC theaters because their employees might be racially biased, and that in the future they will prefer to drive a long way to a theater where they might be treated more fairly. The tweet is finished off with the hashtags #LarryShelton and #boycottAmctheaters alongside the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag. The name Larry Shelton refers to an incident at an Arizona AMC Theater where Shelton, an African American man, was unjustly accused of sneaking inside a movie theater without paying for his ticket (Frank, 2019). The incident was filmed and it caused a stir online; the user who posted the tweet presented here was clearly outraged by the events as well, as they even call for a boycott of all AMC theaters.

This particular tweet shows that the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag is used to protest against all kinds of racist incidents, not just police brutality. Although no lives were a stake at the movie theater, the use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag connects the Larry Shelton case to the bigger picture of racism in the United States. The message encouraging a boycott of AMC theaters also shows the real-life consequences of hashtag activism, which were also discussed earlier on in this study: a video of a racist incident goes viral; an outcry against such racism occurs online; real-life protests are arranged and carried out. By sharing his own actions against racist treatment, the user might hope to inspire others to join in on the boycott. Along with policing the behavior of others, the writer may also hope to encourage AMC theaters to better monitor the conduct of their staff in order to avoid such situations as the Larry Shelton case; the threat of economic loss that a wider boycott on the theater chain could pose might drive the company to change their policies.

Example 1.4.

More black babies are aborted than born alive in New York City.

According to the NYC Health Department 136,426 babies were aborted from 2012-2016 while 118,127 babies were born.

This is a horrible tragedy!

#BlackLivesMatter #Prolife

The above example is another case of connecting the #BlackLivesMatter movement to another controversial issue in society. In this tweet, the writer shares statistics of abortions and births in New York City, and expresses their outrage at the claim that “more black babies are aborted than born alive.” The #BlackLivesMatter hashtag is paired with the #Prolife hashtag, therefore linking it with the fight against abortion. In the United States, the pro-life movement is usually connected with conservative values, while the pro-choice ideology is usually associated with more left-leaning, liberal values. Although views vary between individuals, this generalization is grounded in research: Sterling et al.’s (2019) study on liberal and conservative ideas of a “good society” indicate that while liberals tend to prioritize topics such as “global inequality, women’s rights, racism, criminal justice” (p. 5), etc., conservatives favor themes related to “religion, social order, business, capitalism” (p. 1) and so on. The #BlackLivesMatter movement, with its founders’ demands for equal rights for all black people, including women and LGBTQ individuals, could be said to represent values that are mainly liberal. Therefore, the inclusion of the #BLM and #Prolife hashtags side by side strikes an interesting balance between liberal and conservative ideologies.

As Szabla and Blommaert (2017) observe in their article on context collapse, the actual audience in online interactions might be radically different from the audience the message is intended for. In this case, a person with a more conservative opinion on abortion rights has chosen to employ a hashtag associated with liberal values; this was done perhaps to reach a larger audience, to persuade people to rethink their stance on the issue, or to simply appeal to like-minded people who happen to support both the #BLM and pro-life movements. Indeed, with the use of the #BlackLivesMatter and

#Prolife hashtags, the user might be able to reach a very specific subsection of the Twitter population.

Example 1.5.

We live in a society where an old building burning down gets more attention than issues like racism, Muslim concentration camps, #BlackLivesMatter and etc.

Hate to see it.

In the fifth example, the user expresses their disdain over the uneven way the public's attention is divided over different news stories. The "old building burning down" refers to the Notre-Dame in Paris; parts of the famous cathedral burned down in April 2019, and the incident received a notable amount of media attention ("What we know", 2019). The person who posted the tweet lists a few issues which would deserve the same amount of attention as the fire, one of them being #BlackLivesMatter. The writer appears to see the uneven amount of attention these different issues receive as a negative symptom of our society, as they finish the tweet simply by saying that they "hate to see it." The writer disagrees with the order of importance that has been established for these incidents in the media – and society in general – and attempts to highlight some issues which should take priority over the Notre-Dame fire.

The tweet presented above is a good example of *framing*, which was discussed earlier on in this study in section 3.3. With their tweet, the user is offering a different point of view to the news story: while the media might be portraying the Notre-Dame fire as a global tragedy deserving of everybody's attention, the tweet highlights issues which should receive the same amount of outrage from the public. Xiong et al (2019, p. 12) observe that the "shift away from the media as the primary source of issue framing implies that the power to establish the salience of particular issues now rests with online users through hashtag activism." The user is framing the fire as only one of many stories worthy of attention, and suggesting that the media is portraying the "old building" as a more worthy issue than people suffering from oppression and racism.

Example 1.6.

anyway the #metoo movement is full of the strongest and bravest people out there. it's hard for us abuse victims to be open, but now we have a voice. I'm with you and support you.

The first example of the #MeToo tweets is very straightforwardly positive towards the movement. The people involved with #MeToo are defined as “strong” and “brave”, alluding that it takes courage to take a stance on such a controversial issue. By stating that “it’s hard for *us* abuse victims to be open”, the writer of the tweet reveals that they too have suffered from abuse, and that they have personal experience of the difficulties of sharing their story. “But now we have a voice”, they continue, indicating that #MeToo has given them a sense of community – and through that community, a feeling of power and courage.

The tweet above is an excellent example of the sense of community formed between people from disparate locations through hashtag activism; it is difficult to imagine how these people could have found each other without the help of the internet and the #MeToo hashtag. The power of #MeToo is that it helps erase the feelings of stigma and isolation that prevents those who have been abused from speaking up. As was discussed in section 3.2., one of the most powerful aspects of social media as a whole is that it gives a platform for those who have often been excluded from public discourse; on Twitter, survivors of sexual abuse can create their own narrative of their struggle rather than try to take part in a public conversation which might not take them seriously.

Example 1.7.

I swear people just love to play dumb. We have defined feminism millions of times, we celebrate men (like John Legend etc) that fight for equality for all genders, sexualities etc. We call out sexual abuse against men and have welcomed them into the #MeToo conversation.

The second example from this category makes a statement on the role men have within the #MeToo movement. The user states that men who are involved in the fight for equality for all are “celebrated”, and that those men who have faced sexual abuse are invited into the movement. Although feminism is sometimes portrayed as an “anti-men” ideology, as can be seen from the historical examples given in section 7, the writer of the tweet offers a different opinion. Here, again, a different framing of a controversial issue is presented; #MeToo is depicted as a welcoming rather than a hostile movement, and one that has room for all.

The beginning of the tweet – “I swear some people just love to play dumb” – suggests that the writer has come into contact with people who have differing opinions from their own. By adding their own comments as a response, the writer may hope to change the misinterpretations of #MeToo that they have come across. Because of the co-creational aspects of hashtag activism, the nature of hashtag movements such as #MeToo is shaped through debates and dialogs between Twitter users. A comment portraying #MeToo as a “women’s only” movement might spark a debate about the role of men within the conversation, and through opposing viewpoints, a common ground might be found – at least ideally.

Example 1.8.

Anyone else sexually harassed by TSA agents multiple times through their life?
#MeToo

As was discussed in section 6, when the #MeToo hashtag first went viral in 2017, it was most often used alongside personal stories of sexual harassment or abuse. However, the data from this study suggests that although people do share their own experiences, the hashtag is employed for many different purposes as well. In the example presented above, the writer of the tweet does share their own story of harassment and asks others to take part in the conversation. In a sense, the writer of the tweet also names the perpetrators of the incident by singling out TSA (Transportation Security Administration) agents; this is another way to incite conversation on the specific issue. The tweet illustrates the power of #MeToo well; without having to share uncomfortable details, the user is able to open up about the sexual harassment they have faced on their own terms.

As was discussed earlier in this study, one of the main functions of hashtags is to incite and encourage conversation and debate. With the way the above tweet is phrased – “Anyone else sexually harassed...” – the writer both reveals that they have faced sexual harassment while also encouraging others who have similar experiences to share them. Indeed, the phrasing of the tweet indicates that the writer presumes there certainly *are* others who have similar stories of harassment from TSA agents. One of the key ingredients of a successful tweet is succinctness; as the platform has set a character limit for posts, users should ideally express themselves clearly and concisely. But while conciseness can make communication easy, it can also cause limitations. When discussing serious matters, details and facts are vital; the above tweet could be seen as a spark for a conversation that would hopefully grow as other Twitter users share their experiences as well.

Overall, the tweets in this category employ similar textual features to spread their messages: many of them point out a negative phenomenon in society – such as unfair news coverage or experiences of sexual harassment – sometimes making their own assessment of it, alongside the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo. The hashtags function as counterpoints against these injustices, and their ideologies are offered as tools to fix a broken system. A few of the tweets (Examples 1.1., 1.6., and 1.7.) use the inclusive ‘we’ or ‘us’ alongside the hashtags to express their solidarity with the movements; the invocation of a collective ‘us’ also creates an outside force, ‘them’, that the tweets seek to condemn. All in all, the hashtags are most often employed as hopeful slogans against societal injustices.

8.1.2 Critical

This category consists of tweets which appear to criticize or be negative towards the #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo movements in some way. As there are less tweets in this category overall, there are also fewer examples presented below. Much like within the *Supportive* category, tweets included in this group range from personal comments to wide-reaching criticisms.

Example 2.1.

#CollegeCheatingScandal ok #Liberals here's some white privilege for you. Where's #Antifa now? #BlackLivesMatter Where's your outrage now? Hiding under your hypocrisy?

The first tweet in this category refers to another controversial news story from 2019: the college admissions bribery scandal, which first came to public knowledge in March. Several famous figures were accused of paying large sums of money to colleges in order to get their children admitted in as students. The case received a notable amount of attention due to the fact that among those accused of participating in the scheme were famous actresses Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughling, as well as other high-profile figures (“College admissions scandal”, 2019).

The user who posted the tweet refers to the scandal as an example of white privilege which would call for a response from #BlackLivesMatter, as well as Antifa, an anti-fascist group. The tweet criticizes the #BlackLivesMatter movement’s lack of condemnation of those involved in the cheating scheme by calling it hypocritical. The core message of the tweet is perhaps a criticism for the “liberals”’ unwillingness to condemn those on their side, since according to the writer, both the famous actors caught up in the scheme, as well as #BlackLivesMatter and Antifa, are associated with liberal values. By using many hashtags – #CollegeCheatingScandal, #Liberals, #Antifa, and #BlackLivesMatter – the user clearly wants their message to reach as many people as possible. As the tweet poses many questions, the hashtags might also be used in order to provoke responses from other Twitter users.

Example 2.2.

There are many similarities between #BlackLivesMatter and #Antifa. Both are radical hate groups. Both protest and are disruptive. Just to name a few. You can't change the narrative just because the color changes.

Interestingly, the second tweet in this category is very similar to the first, as both of them compare #BlackLivesMatter to Antifa with critical tones. Unlike the first example, the tweet presented above is very composed in terms of its structure; while the first example uses provoking questions and many hashtags, the second is very matter-of-fact in tone, presenting its message with short, simple sentences. The writer of the tweet displays their knowledge of the two movements by stating that they operate through disruptive protests, which is in fact true of #BlackLivesMatter, as has been discussed earlier on in this study; however, the tweet brands #BLM as a “radical hate group” based on these tactics of peaceful and nonviolent protesting.

The user finishes the tweet with the statement “you can't change the narrative just because the color changes”, possibly referring to race. Although it is not overtly stated, the message of the tweet is perhaps that movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and Antifa which protest against white supremacy should be condemned similarly to those movements rallying for white supremacy. Another interpretation could be that the “color change” occurs between #BlackLivesMatter and Antifa, which would mean the writer of the tweet is under the impression that all #BLM activists are black, and Antifa members white. In either case, using the phrase “radical hate group” when referring to #BlackLivesMatter insinuates that the user is either not very familiar with the movement's overall message of equality and acceptance, or that they consider that message to be hateful instead of necessary. By comparing anti-racist and racist movements, the writer creates a false analogy which ignores the oppression and discrimination that people of color have suffered throughout Western history and suggests that both sides of the argument are to be equally condemned.

Example 2.3.

Amber Heard is an abuser, who falsely accused Johnny Depp of domestic abuse and lied for 3 years. She became the face of the #MeToo campaign and a big feminist overall, while being an evil liar.

#AmberHeardIsAnAbuser

#JohnnyDeppIsInnocent

The third example from this category is a reference to a celebrity scandal which first became public knowledge in 2016, when actress Amber Heard filed for divorce from Johnny Depp, another famous Hollywood star. Heard accused Depp of domestic abuse and violent behavior, but Depp denied the allegations (Chuba, 2018). The case received much publicity, and many questioned whether Heard's accusations were truthful. At a gala event held in celebration of the #MeToo movement in 2018, Heard read from an open letter which she had written for Porter Magazine shortly after her divorce: "When a woman comes forward to speak about her suffering, about injustice, instead of aid, respect and support, she will be met with hostility, skepticism and shame" (Chuba, 2018). At the same event, which was held two years after her divorce, Heard stated that the world was changing as women were coming together and supporting each other: "Standing shoulder to shoulder as women, we comprise a vast army of voices and we can no longer accept silence" (Chuba, 2018).

Although the tweet does not outright condemn or criticize the #MeToo movement itself, it does argue against one of the core ideas of the campaign: believing women when they speak out about their experiences of sexual harassment or abuse. Although nobody can know what happens behind closed doors, the writer's case against Heard seems to rely simply on their belief that she is not telling the truth; the tweet insinuates that Heard's feminism and involvement with the #MeToo movement is deceitful since she is "an evil liar." One of the reasons many women hesitate to speak up about the abuse they have suffered is the fear that they will not be heard or believed: "for decades, the public ignored or ridiculed claims of harassment or assault", Dockterman (2018, p. 28) writes. In a *Time* article about the longevity of #MeToo, Chloe Dykstra describes the hateful comments she received online after accusing her boyfriend and founder of the popular website Nerdlist, Chris Hardwick, of sexual and emotional abuse: "I was attacked relentlessly. There was an

organized group of people online whose sole purpose was to try to disprove me. I was terrified people were going to figure out where I lived” (Dockterman, 2018, p. 28). In the data collected for this study, a few other tweets accusing Heard of lying about her experiences occur; this could suggest a similar attempt to invalidate Heard’s story as the one Dykstra experienced. These kinds of incidents are also an example of online fan culture; people who are deeply involved in a celebrity’s life may go to extreme lengths in an attempt to clear their name and silence their accusers.

Example 2.4.

guilty until proven innocent doesn’t work for me.. this is one of the bad things that
happen in a #metoo world #JohnnyDeppIsInnocent #JohnnyDepp

This example is another tweet related to the celebrity scandal discussed above. Unlike example 2.3, this tweet does not specifically mention Amber Heard, but rather blames the entire #MeToo movement for crucifying a man that the writer presumes to be innocent. The writer states that the campaign has changed society into believing that people are guilty until they are proven innocent, and they claim that this is “one of the bad things that happen in a #metoo world”; the wording suggests that the writer considers other unpleasant changes to have taken place due to the movement. The writer also uses the same hashtag as the one in example 2.3, #JohnnyDeppIsInnocent; this might suggest that supporters of Johnny Depp have chosen to employ some specific hashtags to help spread their message. As was discussed in relation to the previous example, occurrences such as this may point towards an organized online attack against Heard similar to the one Chloe Dykstra describes in the *Time* article. With the help of today’s technology, online attacks can have serious consequences; a phenomenon known as *doxing*, for example, refers to the uncovering of people’s personal information – such as real names, phone numbers, or home addresses –without their permission (Garber, 2014). This can lead the victims of such attacks to feel unsafe and under threat in both the online world as well as the real one.

Example 2.5.

Wonder why there's a mental health crisis going on in our country. It's because the #MeToo and #SuicideAwareness movements seem to only care about celebrities.
 @terrycrews I've been #MeToo since 2005. This is my 3rd time! I need help!
 #NoOneCaresAboutMen #FuckNursingHomes

The fifth tweet from this category criticizes the #MeToo campaign for being too focused on public figures and celebrities. The writer claims that there's a mental health crisis taking place in "our country" – presumably the United States, although they do not specify – which is caused by movements such as #MeToo and #SuicideAwareness caring more about celebrities than civilians. Although #MeToo began at the grassroots level in 2006 with its founder, Tarana Burke, its viral success in late 2017 was heavily Hollywood-centric. It is not surprising that some of the general public might see the campaign as alienating towards "ordinary citizens", whose stories of harassment and abuse do not often receive the same amount of attention as those of famous individuals. However, one of the most stirring effects of the #MeToo campaign was that it exposed how sexual harassment occurs in all levels of society; neither the rich and famous nor everyday citizens are out of its reach.

The writer of the tweet also directly addresses one of the high-profile celebrities involved with the #MeToo movement, Terry Crews, and even asks him for help. In 2017, Crews posted a series of tweets detailing how he was sexually assaulted by a "high-level Hollywood executive", and how he chose not to speak out at the time because he was afraid of being ostracized ("Actor Terry Crews", 2017). Crews was one of the first male stars to share his story of being sexually assaulted, and has been a vocal supporter of the #MeToo movement. Along with addressing Crews in their tweet, the writer adds the hashtags #NoOneCaresAboutMen and #FuckNursingHomes. Although they do not specify their age or gender, the hashtags might suggest the writer is an older male. Since women are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse and therefore many of the frontal figures of #MeToo are women, some men who are survivors of abuse might feel sidelined; this could explain the writer's sentiment that "no one cares about men." All in all, the tweet is another good example of how differing opinions can shape the #MeToo campaign: a comment such as this one criticizing the

exclusion of men from #MeToo might help evolve the movement to be more inclusive of everyone, regardless of factors such as gender or age.

Example 2.6.

Tweety used to be a feminist. Now well he's not so sure. Thank you #metoo

The sixth example of critical tweets is a simple and straightforward statement. The writer declares that although he used to be a feminist, he is not sure he is one anymore; with the passive-aggressive “thank you #metoo”, the writer singles out the movement as the reason they no longer consider themselves a feminist. Although the writer does not specify his reasons for no longer supporting feminism, the sentiment the tweet conveys is perhaps that in his eyes, #MeToo has taken the ideology too far. After the triumphant first moments of #MeToo’s viral success in 2017 there came the inevitable backlash, as a part of the public felt that the rules of society were changing too fast. Some claimed that in a post-#MeToo world, it would be impossible for members of the opposite sex to interact with each other casually. In an article for the *National Review*, Heather Wilhelm (2017) argues that the problem with the #MeToo hashtag is that it “sweeps between heinous crimes and socially awkward comments”; the insinuation is that for some, the definition of sexual harassment is so vague that it can mean almost anything from rape to uncomfortable flirtation.

Although the notion that the term “sexual harassment” is difficult to pin down may have some truth to it, the findings of Atwater et al.’s (2018) study on people’s perception of sexual harassment in the workplace suggest otherwise. When asked whether different behaviors ranging from complimenting a co-worker’s looks to sending them sexual pictures qualify as sexual harassment, men and women seemed to have similar opinions; according to Atwater et al. (2018) “the notion that men don’t know their behavior is troublesome or women are overly sensitive and see many things as harassment that men are unaware of both seem to be untrue. For the most part, men and women are on the same page about what is harassment [...]” (p. 3). When it comes to the tweet presented above, it is not clear if the writer disagrees with the #MeToo movement’s definitions of sexual harassment, or whether his issue is with some other aspect of the campaign. The tweet also

demonstrates one of the negative sides Twitter's character limit: while it is easy to simply state that you dislike something, constructive criticism is more difficult to convey in a few sentences. However, in this specific case it is possible that the criticism is left unresolved on purpose.

Example 2.7.

It is so fucking sad that it took 49 Muslims to die for you (media) and others to say that "terrorism has no color." But when a celebrity utters the word "faggot" we experience national backlash. Fuck a biased #metoo movement. Gays, Muslims, and all people need equality today.

The sixth example presented here is another good example of framing; the writer compares two news stories and expresses outrage at the different ways they have been presented in the media. The reference to the deaths of 49 Muslims is possibly related to the Christchurch mosque attacks in New Zealand, although it is not specifically stated (Kingsley, 2019); the celebrity scandal which it is compared to refers most likely to Kevin Hart being fired as the host of the Academy Awards due to his past homophobic comments (Lyons, 2018). The writer of the tweet considers the mosque attacks a more important news story than the Oscars controversy, and lays most of the blame on the media for the public's lack of interest in the suffering of Muslims.

It is unclear how the #MeToo movement is connected to either of these news stories, but the writer also blames the campaign for being "biased"; perhaps they consider #MeToo to be biased against gay people or Muslims, since they single out those two groups – alongside "all people" – as being deserving of equal treatment in society. Another interpretation could be that the writer considers #MeToo to be guilty of a bias towards celebrities in the same fashion as the media. This tweet is somewhat similar to example 2.4 in that it seems to criticize the media – and possibly the #MeToo movement as well – for being too focused on celebrities.

All in all, the tweets in this category employ quite similar rhetorical features as the ones in *Supportive* to get their messages across. However, while in the previous category the hashtags were used as hopeful slogans against the negatives pointed out in the tweets, here the hashtag movements

are often singled out as the causes of the negative phenomena: #BlackLivesMatter is addressed as a responsible party for the college cheating scandal in example 2.1., while #MeToo is singled out as the reason for a nationwide mental health crisis and an islamophobic terrorist attack in examples 2.5. and 2.7. Many of the tweets follow the pattern of pointing out a negative in society alongside the hashtags, but rather than offering the hashtag movements as a solution, they portray them as the guilty parties.

8.1.3. *Unclear*

This section will present the tweets which neither support nor criticize the #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo movements, yet still feature the hashtag. The tweets range from everyday observations to provoking comments, which indicates that the hashtag is used for a wide range of purposes even by those who do not choose to comment on the core messages of the movements in their tweet. The possible reasons behind this phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in section 9.

Example 3.1.

9/11 was an inside joke #blacklivesmatter
 #hashtagsdontcountagainstyourcharacterlimit #MeToo
 #justplayedexplodingkittens #peta @peta @Lego_Group @BurgerKing
 @Microsoft

The first example from this category expresses neither support nor criticism towards the #BlackLivesMatter movement – in fact, the tweet makes no comment on the movement whatsoever. The statement “9/11 was an inside joke” is followed by multiple hashtags that do not appear to be connected to the text, including #peta and #MeToo. While calling 9/11 an “inside joke” is possibly

a twist on the conspiracy theories that insist the terror attack was an inside job, and the inclusion of Peta – an animal rights organization – alongside the hashtag #justplayedexplodingkittens is likely simply an attempt to provoke a response from other Twitter users, the purpose of the inclusion of the #BLM hashtag is left unclear.

Above all, the aim of the tweet presented above is to attract attention – most likely negative: the use of multiple hashtags and usernames of companies such as Microsoft and Burger King is presumably an attempt to ensure that the tweet reaches a wide audience. Including hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo which refer to issues that often divide people's opinions further accentuates the provoking nature of the tweet. The tweet is a good example of *trolling*, which is a common phenomenon in online discussions, although one that it is difficult to define; Hardaker (2010), referring to previous research, explains it as “the posting of incendiary comments with the intent of provoking others into conflict” (p. 224). Without taking a stance on any controversial issue, the tweet might still incite irritated responses from people who are against the trivialization of the values that #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, or Peta represent.

Example 3.2.

Now I'm up watch #FreshPrince #BlackLivesMatter #BlackFamilySitcoms

The second example in this category illustrates the way in which the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag is used in tweets which share everyday observations and occurrences. Although the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag represents a highly political and often controversial cause, it is used in a tweet that makes no comment whatsoever on the movement itself: the user simply states what TV show they are currently watching. The only link between the hashtag and the rest of the tweet is that the show the user refers to, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, has a mainly African-American cast of characters.

Tweets such as this one might suggest that a kind of trivialization of the hashtag occurs once it becomes well-known; other data from this study also points towards this conclusion. This phenomenon is related to the co-creational nature of hashtag activism, which was discussed in

section 3.3. As the popularity of the hashtag increases, users who are less inclined to comment on the ideology and goals behind the hashtag may want to use it in unrelated contexts in order to reach a wider audience for their tweets. Because of the co-creational nature of hashtag activism – the fact that the movement finds its shape in the hands of the general public instead of one or two figureheads – these tweets also contribute to the overall image of the movement.

Example 3.3.

It's OK to be White. #BlackLivesMatter #Feminism #CNN #Trump #Islam
#HillaryClinton #BernieSanders #ItsOkToBeWhite #AllLivesMatter

The third tweet included in this category is most likely another example of trolling; the statement “it’s OK to be white” is followed by multiple hashtags, many of which refer to controversial issues or figures. The statement about whiteness being acceptable may be a tongue-in-cheek comment on today’s “social justice culture” and its attitude towards racism which some falsely interpret as an attack on whiteness. Although the statement itself may even be presented in all seriousness, the hashtags that follow it cause the tweet to give the impression of trolling. Much like the statement, issues such as Trump, Islam, Clinton, and Sanders, are bound to raise strong feelings in some Twitter users. Since the main objective of trolling is to cause controversy and incite arguments, a tweet like this may very well achieve its goal.

The inclusion of both the #BlackLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter hashtags in a single tweet also creates a confusing contrast to which many Twitter users may have a negative reaction. The #AllLivesMatter hashtag was coined as a response to the #BLM hashtag by those who feel the “black lives matter” sentiment is discriminatory towards other races. This response ignores the reasons behind the phrase: that society often treats black lives as disposable and less valuable, and therefore they should be supported and celebrated against such racist discrimination. The phrase does not claim that other lives are not valuable, yet some mistakenly understand it so.

Example 3.4.

Explain this feminists, if sperm die when not in vagina are people killing millions upon trillions of kids? @femfreq @HappyFeminist @FeministPress
#BlackLivesMatter

In the example presented above, the writer possibly attempts to articulate an argument against abortion. The tweet is most likely another example of trolling due to its provoking tone and divisive topic, as well as the typos and exaggerations that occur in the text. By beginning the tweet with “explain this feminists”, the writer clearly attempts to aggravate a response out of a certain section of Twitter users; this is accentuated by the use of multiple usernames all related to feminism at the end of the tweet. Although it is conceivable that the writer actually believes their own argument about “millions upon trillions of kids” being massacred daily, the tweet is almost certainly an attempt to incite an argument about abortion and women’s rights. The use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag seems out of place, since the tweet makes no reference to race or racism; therefore, the hashtag was probably added simply to stir the pot a bit more by adding another divisive issue to the mix, as well as to gain more attention.

Example 3.5.

38 degrees outside and Foothill bus is a no show. Wow how inhumane Foothill Bus Company can be #metoo #Metoomovement #sisterhood

The fifth example from this category is a tweet which does not comment on the #MeToo movement whatsoever, yet features the hashtag. The writer complains about being stuck outside in the cold weather waiting for a bus, and calls the bus company “inhumane.” In addition to referring to the #MeToo movement, the writer uses the hashtag #sisterhood. It is unclear how the “inhumanity” of the bus company is related to the #MeToo movement, or why the writer chose to use those

particular hashtags. The data for this study includes two others tweets from the same person in which they complain about the same situation, saying that they are waiting for the bus with another passenger. If both the writer and the other passenger are women, it could be that the hashtag #sisterhood refers to them both being stuck together in an uncomfortable situation. Otherwise the tweets' connection to women's rights is left unclear.

As was discussed in relation to the #BlackLivesMatter tweets, findings of these particular hashtags appearing in tweets which do not otherwise comment on the movements might suggest that as the movements receive more and more publicity, the hashtags themselves become somewhat trivialized. If the writer simply desires attention or more followers for their Twitter account, the hashtag might be thrown in as a joke in order to boost the circulation of the tweet. This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in section 9.

Example 3.6.

#newzelandshooting #NewZealandMosqueShooting #salah #fridayprayer #metoo
 #fuckthemedial #BeEqual #ChristchurchMosqueShooting #Christchurchstrong
 #NewZeland #mosqueshooting

The final tweet from the *Unclear* category is a cluster of hashtags with no actual commentary whatsoever. The hashtags refer to terrorist attacks which took place in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on 15 March 2019, and killed 51 people: the shooter, a self-identified white supremacist, left behind a manifesto steeped in far-right racist rhetoric, and was able to livestream his first attack online (Kingsley, 2019). The horrific attacks raised discussion about the reach of white supremacist ideologies around the world, and the role which social media plays in the circulation of hateful rhetoric in online environments.

Although the writer of the tweet does not comment on the incident, some of the hashtags, such as #BeEqual and #Christchurchstrong suggest a condemnation of the attacks. The hashtag #fuckthemedial might suggest a similar criticism and condemnation of the media's depiction of the mosque attacks as was expressed in example 2.7. However, since the writer has added no text other

than the many hashtags, it is difficult to decipher what the intended purpose of the tweet is. Especially the use of the #MeToo hashtag seems slightly out of place, since the attack on the mosque was primarily motivated by racism and islamophobia rather than sexism – although those sentiments often go hand in hand. It is possible that this tweet is another example of trolling, although not an as obvious one as example 3.1.

Overall, most of these tweets are vague in their messages as well as their use of the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo hashtags. They share many similarities, such as their provocative nature and the use of multiple hashtags side by side. The pattern of pointing out a negative alongside the hashtags is not as prevalent here as it is in the previous categories, but some of the tweets (such as examples 3.2. and 3.3.) point out positives – although ambiguous – followed by the hashtags #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo. In general, the purpose of the hashtags in these tweets is more often to provoke rather than to express personal opinions, which differs from the tweets in the *Supportive* and *Critical* categories.

9. Findings and discussion

As the data presented in section 8 suggests, the hashtags #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo are used in a variety of contexts on Twitter, and for many different purposes. The division of the tweets into three different categories – *Supportive*, *Critical*, and *Unclear* – was done in order to achieve a general idea of the different purposes the hashtags in question are employed for. With #BlackLivesMatter, the *Supportive* category included 21 tweets, *Critical* 2, and *Unclear* 12. With #MeToo, the *Supportive* category consisted of 18 tweets, *Critical* 9, and *Unclear* 8. Combined, the *Supportive* category includes 39, *Critical* 11, and *Unclear* 20 tweets. Further analysis could dig deeper into the specifics of the comments and opinions presented in the tweets, but that is beyond the scope of this particular study. Although the categorization of the tweets is relatively simple, some clear findings were made from the data; these will be discussed below.

First of all, the fairly high number of tweets in the *Unclear* category suggests that the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo hashtags were quite often used in tweets which did not comment on the movements behind the hashtags whatsoever. One conclusion which can be drawn from this, and which was alluded to earlier on in this study, is that a phenomenon of *trivialization* occurs to successful hashtags when they become well-known among the general public. This could be described as a side-effect of success: when a hashtag gains considerable popularity, it can be used as a tool to gain attention. As hashtags in general increase the circulation of tweets, Twitter users who are not otherwise inclined comment on the issues that #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo represent might still employ those hashtags to ensure that their tweets are read by a larger audience. The hashtags can also be used jokingly to refer to unrelated issues or events, as is (presumably) the case with examples 3.1 and 3.4.

Another observation made from the data is that hashtags were often used alongside comments which attempt to *frame* a particular news story in a different light. In some ways, framing is present in almost every tweet in the data, since most of them seek to portray an incident or phenomenon from a certain point of view, either positive or negative. Example 1.5 illustrates this practice well, with the writer downplaying a specific news event (the Notre-Dame fire) in order to highlight different issues, one of them being #BlackLivesMatter. Similar incidents of framing occur in the rest of the data, which is presented in the appendix of this paper. One of the tweets refers to the college bribery scandal while encouraging people to remember Tonya McDowell, a black mother who lied about her address in order to send her children to a better school, and was sentenced to

prison for this offence. Tweets such as this one aim to remind the public of injustices which may not be front-page news, and encourage them to pay attention to the unequal ways in which different people are treated in society.

Perhaps the most prominent characteristic of hashtag activism is its *co-creational* nature, which has been discussed throughout this paper. This aspect of online discourse is present in all the tweets included in the data: each writer, in their own way, contributes to the overall image of the #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo movements. Although tweets from ordinary citizens obviously carry less weight in the public eye than those of famous figures, the movements still find their shape in the hands of the masses rather than those of a chosen few. This is a feature of activism particular to the online world, and it differentiates modern social justice movements from those that occurred before them. Even though both the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo movements have prominent figures and celebrities supporting them, the internet allows the public to criticize and comment on their actions, therefore guiding the campaigns in different directions. Although the co-creational aspect of hashtag activism has many positives, there are some negative sides to this aspect of online discourse: with so many people offering their viewpoints on certain issues, the overall image may end up rather fragmented.

As was discussed earlier, one of the essential functions of hashtag activism is that it leads to *real-life actions*. While increasing awareness of certain issues is also a step in the right direction, online activism remains rather hollow unless some changes and consequences occur in the real world as well. One of the surprising findings from the data for this study was the somewhat lacking number of tweets which refer to – or encourage people towards – real-life actions. Only one tweet in the data, example 1.3, includes a mention of real-life actions that the writer has taken; in this case, the decision to boycott a certain movie theater chain due to reports of their staff being racially biased. Two other tweets, included in the appendix, refer to events related to #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo that the writers have attended. Although the data for this study is relatively small, and therefore conclusive generalizations cannot be made, it can be stated that references to real-life actions (such as protests, rallies, or other events related to the hashtag movements) are one of the rarer reasons for employing the hashtags. Of course, the timeframe when the data was collected is a big factor here; if the tweets had been collected, for instance, when the Ferguson protests took place in 2014, there may have been many more tweets encouraging people to participate in the demonstrations.

10. Conclusions

Some of the research questions for this study were: for what purposes are the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo hashtags most often employed on Twitter? Do people comment on the issues and ideologies represented by the hashtags, or do they simply employ the hashtags in completely unrelated tweets? What kind of linguistic patterns or practices are used in the tweets in connection with the hashtags? While many of these issues were addressed earlier in this study, this final section will take one last look at the bigger picture of social justice movements in the online world as can be assessed through the findings and results of this study, as well as propose topics for further research in this particular field.

Overall, most of the tweets examined in this study employ the hashtags to voice support for the movements rather than to criticize them. While many of the tweets do not directly discuss the campaigns themselves, they enforce the ideologies that #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo seek to represent: highlighting racial issues in society, addressing everyday racism, encouraging survivors of sexual harassment to come forward, and so on. One conclusion that can be drawn from the broad scope of topics that the tweets cover is that #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have become somewhat like ‘umbrella terms’ for racism and sexism: although both movements started out by addressing very specific issues, police brutality and sexual harassment, their reach has grown much wider. Both #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo are used as rallying cries against all kinds of biased behavior ranging from unfair news coverage to acts of violence.

In terms of the bigger picture of social justice movements in the online landscape, the issue of framing deserves to be highlighted for many reasons. Recent years have brought on a wave – or a flood – of disinformation and ‘fake news’ that circulate mainly online. While equal access to information is crucial in any society, the internet’s role in the news cycle has led to many complications. As social media allows anyone and everyone to write and share almost anything, the truth can become muddled, sources difficult to trace, and the legitimacy of many claims is left questionable at best. On Twitter, framing is one way to challenge the mainstream news media. While this can often be a positive thing leading people to question the status quo and pay attention to issues that might otherwise be sidelined, it can only be truly impactful if it is based on reliable sources and provable facts. As this study did not examine tweets that included links, it is difficult to say how often and how accurately tweets that include references to new stories are sourced. This, as

well as examining pictures and videos posted alongside the hashtags, could be relevant topics for future research.

One aspect of online activism that was discussed earlier in this study was its performative nature. While spreading awareness is important, the true measure of successful activism are the actual structural changes that occur in society as a result. While both #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have achieved many milestones since their establishment, one side-effect of their success has been the trivialization of their messages, as indicated by this study. The number of tweets referring to real-life actions related to #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo in the data for this study was surprisingly small. An interesting topic for further research could be a survey of Twitter users who have employed the hashtags, and whether their online activism has influenced their daily lives by leading them to attend protests, arrange boycotts, or organize meetings, for instance. Although it could be a more difficult task to carry out, its results might give a clearer indication of whether the accusations of ‘slacktivism’ that are often targeted towards online activism hold any truth.

In conclusion, online activism is a topic that deserves much attention and research. Although it may sound like a very specific area of study, it encompasses many issues that will shape the future of our society: the access to information, the questioning of authorities, the challenging of the status quo. Knowledge is power when only a chosen few have access to it; today, we all have access to that power, as long as we understand it and act on it. The aspects that make social media a powerful tool are also the ones that hinder it, as the voices on Twitter are almost as diverse as the population of the world. Too often messages become muddled, and the truth gets lost in the noise. But sometimes the diverse voices emerge as one; in the cases of #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo, social media shows its potential as a revolutionary tool. As online activism is a relatively new phenomenon, we are still finding our way through the learning curve. Hopefully, in time, new voices of change will be heard around the world.

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11. Appendix

1.Supportive

Example 1.1.

We are the generation of equality.

We are the generation of political activity.

We are the generation of compassion and empathy.

We are the generation that will fix the world that your generation has broken.

#Strike4Climate #MarchForOurLives #BlackLivesMatter #BeEqual

Example 1.2.

Say their name. Calvin McKinnis, 2015-12-14 #BlackLivesMatter

Example 1.3.

So I won't be going to @AMCTheatres anymore I rather drive out my way to @CobbTheatres and be greeted with non biased staff members. #LarryShelton #BlackLivesMatter #boycottAmctheaters

Example 1.4.

More black babies are aborted than born alive in New York City.

According to the NYC Health Department 136,426 babies were aborted from 2012-2016 while 118,127 babies were born.

This is a horrible tragedy!

#BlackLivesMatter #Prolife

Example 1.5.

We live in a society where an old building burning down gets more attention than issues like racism, Muslim concentration camps, #BlackLivesMatter and etc.

Hate to see it.

Example 1.6.

anyway the #metoo movement is full of the strongest and bravest people out there. it's hard for us abuse victims to be open, but now we have a voice. I'm with you and support you.

Example 1.7.

I swear people just love to play dumb. We have defined feminism millions of times, we celebrate men (like John Legend etc) that fight for equality for all genders,

sexualities etc. We call out sexual abuse against men and have welcomed them into the #MeToo conversation.

Example 1.8.

Anyone else sexually harassed by TSA agents multiple times through their life?
#MeToo

Example 1.9.

If your ancestors weren't raped,killed,sold,beaten and discriminated like mine were
....DON'T CALL ME N*GGA

#InstagramBlackout2019 #BlackFace #BlackLivesMatter #BlackGirlMagic
#NotACostume #NotYourN*gga #BLACKONBLACK #follobackforfolloback
#likeforlike

Example 1.10.

To my friends of color still in Humboldt stay safe up there and please start making plans to move. Josiah isn't the first case that has gone cold with an obvious white murderer. Justice for Josiah Lawson, Virgil Payne and Corey Clark.

#JusticeforJosiah #BlackLivesMatter

Example 1.11.

Semitic: n, constituting the main subgroup of the Afro-Asiatic family. To be anti-semitic @IlhanMN would have to be against herself. When 1 population assumes the meaning of a term, it offends the others who share in it. @IsraelinUS @Israel @israelproject #BlackLivesMatter @CNN

Example 1.12.

@SpencerKarter I've just found out that #JasonVanDyke, the #Disgraced ex-#Chicago cop who's serving a 7-year sentence 4 murdering #LaquanMcDonald, has now been transferred 2 a federal prison in #NewYork. Reaction?

#RIPLaquanMcDonald #BlackLivesMatter #EndPoliceBrutality

Example 1.13.

The gun violence and domestic abuse has gotta stop! We all need to put the guns down! Instead of picking up a gun, pick up a book to read. You gotta learn how to move differently, and be careful who you associate yourself with.

#BlackLivesMatter

Example 1.14.

Great event tonight @BSAFrostburg #BlackLivesMatter

Example 1.15.

Wow two USC members of the athletic staff already FIRED over #admissionscam.
Imagine if police got fired for shooting innocent black people. Imagine.

#BlackLivesMatter #TakeAKnee #Justice #Healing #Equality @EqualRightsAdv
@ACLU #AdmissionScam #BLM @SenKamalaHarris @GavinNewsom

Example 1.16.

Black families continue to experience racism in Cambridge public schools. BLM
Cambridge has been attending family conferences and administrative meetings
#blacklivesmatter #COM359tweets

Example 1.17.

@survivorstrust Why are you plotting against the removal of our #MJ signs?
Shouldn't you be focusing your time and efforts helping real survivors of sexual
abuse? You know, like the hundreds of survivors of Harvey Weinstein?
#BLACKLIVESMATTER

Example 1.18.

Mission trips are so hypocritical bc the WHITE, PRIVILEGED people that go to pose
with some black babies come back to the U.S. only to oppose things like
#BlackLivesMatter and support officers that MURDER innocent black children

Example 1.19.

When you read about Lori Loughlin & Felicity Huffman, remember Tonya McDowell, a Black mom from Connecticut who spent 2012-2017 in jail for lying about her address to send her kindergartener to a better school.

#Lawrence #MSNBC #CNN #blacklivesmatter

Example 1.20.

#365Black: #ArethaFranklin was not only the “Queen of Soul”, but she was also the first woman and first black woman inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

#BlackHistory #AmericanHistory #BlackLivesMatter

Example 1.21.

Our school system has been broken since the founding of this country. It needs a complete revamp! So many kids, and brilliant minds, are left behind. I hope this is at least a tiny wake up call to this country. #WhitePrivilege #BlackLivesMatter

Example 1.22.

The only black #establishment likes is one who will not reproduce, remind me 1000 years later, it's true #blacklivesmatter they will put up with you if you show open hatred to your race like Thomas Sowell and Sheriff Clarke.

Example 1.23.

Say their name. Bryan Keith Day, 2015-07-25 #BlackLivesMatter.

Example 1.24.

It's sad how we blacks are being treated in our own country. Bheki Cele never apologized for the lives that were taken by police officers in black communities.

#bhekicele

#blacklivesmatter

#bhekicelemustfall

Example 1.25.

No questions for @andrewschultz from @joerogan about the sexual abuse and rape of a minor by his podcast co-host @cthagod shame on you Rogan.

#MeToo

Example 1.26.

At a time when we're seeing increasing numbers of women speak out via the #MeToo movement, this violence continues going unreported & uninvestigated, meaning migrant women are further away from accessing justice

Example 1.27.

Why you need to #SaveODAAT @netflix:

5. The show also talked about #metoo movement. They had an entire episode in S3 where they've only talked about women and what they have to go through literally everyday. catcalling, inequality, discrimination, men forcing themselves on us.

Example 1.28.

It is sad that in 2018, cases of women being victimized, raped and abused are still rampant. The #seungrisexscandal, #rkellytapes and #MeToo campaign indicate that there is still much to be done. Let us #ProtectWomen #SpeakUp

Example 1.29.

Ronaldo gets his day on the pitch even after something as polarising as #MeToo someone with sexual assault charges dating back 2 to 05 remains unscathed by the media who conveniently nipped this story in the bud. While Ronaldo's survivors have 2 stomach this sickening media circus

Example 1.30.

Sexual abuse victims have a very hard time believing that you ever don't trust us. What right do you have to question someone who had his or her own trust taken away as a small child.

#MeToo

Example 1.31.

A law school held a panel discussion on “Due process in the #MeToo era” (my translation of the title). 4 panelists, lawyers and academics, two male and two female. Not a political rally, an academic panel without any particular agenda.

Example 1.32.

#MeToo I was molested multiple times as a child growing up. I was taught at 7 to stand naked in front of a window cause, “They would Like it.”

Example 1.33.

As a company, it is our duty to spread the message and fight against sexual harassment at workplace #WeAreAgainstHarrassment #SupportSafeworkplaces #metoo @UKinAhmedabad @JaydipParikh @kumarmanish9
A great initiative by @UKinIndia

Example 1.34.

I wud repeat my twit again #women don't want2 #report bcoz what next? #metoo also saw many #women apologizing bcoz they r afraid they won't b getting job bcoz of #datamining. #LAW IS mute here. Support #women who dare2report.
#supportsafeworkplace @UKinAhmedabad @SayftyCom

Example 1.35.

Men who have been terrified by #MeToo, here's why you shouldn't be:

Even now, I find myself defending who may or may not have done me wrong or led me on or trailed me along. I know I can easily label someone an asshole just because he's a guy, but it doesn't work that way.

Example 1.36.

The winds of #MeToo have only just begun.

Example 1.37.

Bullying and harassment an emotive topic #metoo

Example 1.38.

Recently a gun-toting potential troll followed me after I RTd about men supporting #MeToo. He unfollowed me a few days later, I assume because he realised I only had 102 followers and wasn't worth trolling. Must do something about that. Do you think posting cat videos would work?

Example 1.39.

Fuck, pre-#metoo blockbusters were straight-up sausagefests huh?

2. Critical

Example 2.1.

#CollegeCheatingScandal ok #Liberals here's some white privilege for you. Where's #Antifa now? #BlackLivesMatter Where's your outrage now? Hiding under your hypocrisy?

Example 2.2.

There are many similarities between #BlackLivesMatter and #Antifa. Both are radical hate groups. Both protest and are disruptive. Just to name a few. You can't change the narrative just because the color changes.

Example 2.3.

Amber Heard is an abuser, who falsely accused Johnny Depp of domestic abuse and lied for 3 years. She became the face of the #MeToo campaign and a big feminist overall, while being an evil liar.

#AmberHeardIsAnAbuser

#JohnnyDeppIsInnocent

Example 2.4.

guilty until proven innocent doesn't work for me.. this is one of the bad things that happen in a #metoo world #JohnnyDeppIsInnocent #JohnnyDepp

Example 2.5.

Wonder why there's a mental health crisis going on in our country. It's because the #MeToo and #SuicideAwareness movements seem to only care about celebrities.
 @terrycrews I've been #MeToo since 2005. This is my 3rd time! I need help!
 #NoOneCaresAboutMen #FuckNursingHomes

Example 2.6.

Tweety used to be a feminist. Now well he's not so sure. Thank you #metoo

Example 2.7.

It is so fucking sad that it took 49 Muslims to die for you (media) and others to say that "terrorism has no color." But when a celebrity utters the word "faggot" we experience national backlash. Fuck a biased #metoo movement. Gays, Muslims, and all people need equality today.

Example 2.8.

The whole #JohnnyDepp #AmberHeard thing never smelled right to me. If Johnny's allegations are true, Ms. Heard should be run out of town on a rail for glomming on to the #metoo movement when *she* was also an abuser.

#JohnnyDeppIsASurvivor

Example 2.9.

Can someone dig up all of the tweets by celebs/verifieds calling #JohnnyDepp an abuser during the #MeToo movement based on nothing more than the word of an extremely psychotic #AmberHeard ? People who rushed to judgement need to be loudly put on blast asap.

Example 2.10.

never has interviewed a single woman who has accused Harvey? #MeToo?? Make your own research @michaeljackson for ever #MJInnocent

Example 2.11.

I see Stacey Dooley has been attacked by the same people that whined about Seann Walsh. Oh wait..... weird how we treat a one night kiss cheating MAN compared to a full blown affair cheating WOMAN that dumped the guy.

#SeannWalsh #strictlycomedancing #staceydooley #MeToo

3. Unclear

Example 3.1.

9/11 was an inside joke #blacklivesmatter

#hashtagsdontcountagainstyourcharacterlimit #MeToo

#justplayedexplodingkittens #peta @peta @Lego_Group @BurgerKing

@Microsoft

Example 3.2.

Now I'm up watch #FreshPrince #BlackLivesMatter #BlackFamilySitcoms

Example 3.3.

It's OK to be White. #BlackLivesMatter #Feminism #CNN #Trump #Islam

#HillaryClinton #BernieSanders #ItsOkToBeWhite #AllLivesMatter

Example 3.4.

Explain this feminists, if sperm die when not in vagina are people killing millions upon trillions of kids? @femfreq @HappyFeminist @FeministPress

#BlackLivesMatter

Example 3.5.

38 degrees outside and Foothill bus is a no show. Wow how inhumane Foothill Bus Company can be #metoo #Metoomovement #sisterhood

Example 3.6.

#newzelandshooting #NewZealandMosqueShooting #salah #fridayprayer #metoo
#fuckthemedial #BeEqual #ChristchurchMosqueShooting #Christchurchstrong
#NewZeland #mosqueshooting

Example 3.7.

mine craft observe thick #blacklivesmatter

Example 3.8.

#katiehalper laid a smack down on @AIPAC and left @mschlapp with a bloody nose.
#ClassicRock @WWE #SmackDownLive @IlhanMN @Israel
#BlackLivesMatter

Example 3.9.

Watching #CNN Cuomo and Don Lemon good buddy's, should that chance 1 in 44 trillion happen that Lemon discovers a law of the universe, Cuomo will be gone to join rest of whites, impossible, and then they will just take it, Cuomo pretending the envy will eat him #blacklivesmatter

Example 3.10.

So, question, does the #woman of color, #BlackLivesMatter #MeghanMarkle have aides that also look act feel and think like her in the communal way that is #BlackPeople a part of which her #HRH is? @KensingtonRoyal @RoyalFamily

Example 3.11.

found out one of my professors is pro #blacklivesmatter ... yuh

Example 3.12.

the first 2 episodes of the new twilight zone are good, but episode 3 is incredible. it perfectly showcases how our current reality is so bizarre & twisted that it literally belongs in the twilight zone #TheTwilightZone @TheTwilightZone #BlackLivesMatter

Example 3.13.

constipated rn... #BlackLivesMatter

Example 3.14.

It's still OK to be white in 2017. #BlackLivesMatter #Feminism #CNN #Trump #Islam #HillaryClinton #BernieSanders #ItsOkToBeWhite #AllLivesMatter

Example 3.15.

2am bus on time but heater doesn't work still itching from CA-CA PEE-PEE
 Biohazard bozo clown CUNT who never pays her fare. Gets to contaminate bus seat
 YUK #metoo #Metoomovement #sisterhood

Example 3.16.

EXCLUSIVE Isha Koppikar on #MeToo: If women give in for the indecent proposals,
 then you can't blame the man

Example 3.17.

@Ironmg @mikeparry8 Wetting myself this morning listening to Porky define the
 term "Nancy" - I have a feeling He's not going to be on the #metoo Christmas party
 invite list

Example 3.18.

1:18 am Foothill Bus is no show. So I and another passenger has to stay in the cold
 #metoo #memovement #Sisterhood

Example 3.19.

Oh we don't even know if the boys already suffered from it yesterday
@Official_IN2IT @namas_k I think we need a #metoo for them at this point

Example 3.20.

Moped goons beyond a joke, jonny driverly agrees it's hilarious to target them with
the #Audi force the little basta*ds off the road #china #justice #metoo